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THE REDEEMER.



THE REDEEMER :

Discourses

BY

EDMOND DE PRESSENSÉ, D.D.

WITH INTRODUCTION BY

WILLIAM LINDSAY ALEXANDER, D.D.

EDINBURGH :

T. & T. CLARK, 38 GEORGE STREET.

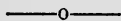
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INTRODUCTION.



HAVING had something to do in promoting the publication of this volume, I have been requested by those most interested in it to prefix to it a few words by way of introduction. With this request I very cheerfully comply, though I feel that the work needs no recommendation from me; the name of its author, its subject, and its contents, furnish a claim upon the attention of the community, to which nothing needs be added.

To all who take an interest in the state of religion on the Continent, the name of M. Edmond de Pressensé is well-known. He stands forth as one of the most zealous, fearless, and eloquent defenders of evangelical truth and the claims of the Bible, alike against the influence of traditionalism on the one hand, and the assaults of neologianism on the other, at present on the field in France. A man of high culture and large intellectual resources; intimately acquainted as well with the history of the Church in past ages, as with the current of religious speculation, the state of religious life, and the tendencies of prevailing opinions and habits, among those immediately around him; gifted with remarkable powers of clear, pointed, and eloquent discourse; and possessing thus unusual means of rendering aid to any cause whose side he may

espouse, he has ever shown himself ready, by tongue or pen, to consecrate his best energies to the defence and propagation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. One of the most eloquent preachers in Paris, he has also earned for himself no mean place among the few who, in modern* French literature, have brought genius, learning, and philosophy to the service of genuine and intelligent piety.

In the little work which is now presented in translation to the English public, M. de Pressensé has had in view primarily the peculiar state, in a religious aspect, of the community in the midst of which he labours; but his survey is so broad, and he has based his reasonings and appeals on so just an analysis of human nature in its essential qualities and necessities, that nearly every sentence he has uttered will be found fitted to be as useful here as in France. He appears to have aimed at giving his work both an apologetic and a practical character. Under the former he presents an argument in favour of Christianity based on the fact that in the person and work of Jesus Christ we find the proper end of all the world's preceding history; the only solution of the deep enigma of man's inner life, as manifested in the heathen no less than in the Jewish world; the satisfaction of all the conscious and all the unconscious longings of the human heart, for light, and purity, and peace; the fulfilment not only of that body of prediction which was uttered in clear words, through divine inspiration, among the favoured people, but also of all those half-articulate aspirations after renewal, which broke forth ever and anon from the heart of heathenism, and those dim foreshadowings of a better future which tended to mitigate its otherwise unbroken

gloom. Under the latter character he labours to send home the conviction that apart from Christ, the Divine Redeemer, there is no prospect of permanent amelioration for society or the individual; that all the means and appliances of material civilization are impotent to alleviate the burdens, or calm the restlessness of the human soul; and that only by accepting the salvation which is in Christ Jesus can man's path through life be other than a disturbed, beclouded and weary passage to a darker and more cheerless future. Both these aspects of his subject the author seems to me to have presented with great ability, force, and eloquence.

Addressing persons not much addicted to theological disquisition, and desirous of producing an impression in favour of Christianity upon a community unhappily not imbued with any just acquaintance with its principles and doctrines, the author has wisely, I think, sought to present the truth in a free and popular rather than a scientific manner; and indeed has apparently been careful to avoid those technical formulæ in which the truths of Christianity are generally presented in this country. It is necessary to keep this in mind in reading his work, otherwise he might be suspected of defective statement of truth, when in reality the only thing wanting is the ordinary vehicle in which the truths of the Bible are wont to be presented. I would not, indeed, claim for the author the name of a profound theologian. On the contrary, I am free to confess that it is here if anywhere that a weak point is to be found in his writings. Indeed he sometimes seems to me to express himself, especially when touching on points involving the more difficult questions of theology, in such a way as to suggest the

suspicion that he has not thoroughly investigated the subject. Nevertheless any deficiencies which may appear in his statements of divine truth will be found, on careful and unbiassed consideration, to exist for the most part in appearance only, and not in reality. On the all-important subject, for instance, of the effect of our Saviour's sufferings, the avoidance of the words "atonement" and "propitiation" may lead some to suspect the author of unsound or defective views on this cardinal point; but though I confess I should have been better pleased had the author more fully and explicitly brought forward the vicarious character and propitiatory effect of the sufferings of Christ, I think it due to him to remind the reader that he has uttered nothing which is opposed to sound doctrine on this head; that he has advanced no theory of sacrifice which is calculated to do away with the proper atoning efficacy of the Saviour's obedience unto death; that he has expressly and repeatedly asserted that the sufferings of the Redeemer were *expiatory*; and that he utterly repudiates all opinions which would go to resolve the effect of these into a mere attestation of our Lord's sincerity as a teacher, or a mere example to His people of meek submission to the will of God.

There is one point, however, incidentally touched upon by M. de Pressensé, on which I much regret that he should have given utterance to sentiments with which few evangelical Christians in this country will accord. I refer to his views respecting the design of the Sabbath, and its permanent obligation under the Christian dispensation. He has dragged this subject in without any apparent reason, so far as his main theme is concerned, for the purpose, as it would seem, of giving expression to a somewhat vehement assertion of the

opinions respecting it, which unhappily prevail on the continent, even among evangelical Christians. From the manner in which he has expressed himself, it appears to me that he neither justly apprehends the opinions and habits of those whom he denounces, nor is aware of the arguments on which they rest their case. To those who have studied the subject, his remarks on it will appear shallow and prejudiced. He confounds the Jewish Sabbatical system with the primitive Sabbath; which, though of necessity incorporated with the Levitical institute, was perfectly distinct from it, and independent of it, and which, as it has existed from the beginning, must continue to exist until it be absorbed in that of which it is the symbol and the foretaste—the rest that remaineth for the people of God. He has overlooked the fact that the sabbath forms part of a code of moral law which was marked off from the rest of the Levitical legislation by God Himself, who wrote it with his own hand on the tables of stone, whilst the other parts were conveyed through the mediation of Moses. He shows, also, defective knowledge of human nature, when he suggests that now every day is to be kept in every sense alike holy; an idea which cannot be acted upon without imminent risk of all days becoming alike unholy, seeing it is only by special observances and sanctities that the general current of religious affection and feeling can be sustained amid so much that tends to impede and degrade it. And he betrays the usual ignorance of those with whom he sides when he represents those whose views he opposes as having no way of keeping the Sabbath-day holy, but by turning it into a day of austerity, penance, and gloom;—as if there were no such thing as holy joy, and sacred mirth, and

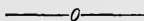
the jubilant gladness of those who, when they are merry, sing psalms! I could have wished this part of the book had been deleted.

Taking the work as a whole, I would earnestly commend it as well adapted to be useful. Believers will find in it much that is fitted to elevate their thoughts of the person and work of the Redeemer, and to draw out their warmest affections towards Him; and if it should fall into the hands of any who may have doubts as to His claims, or who, admitting these in words, have never submitted to them in effect, I cannot but indulge the hope that, if they will give it their candid perusal, it may, with God's blessing, prove the means of leading them to sounder views, and to a settled acceptance of the Lord Jesus Christ as their Redeemer—their Prophet, Priest, and King.

I have only to add, that the translation, which is the production of a lady whom I have not been able to persuade to put her name to her work, very faithfully represents the original in form as well as in substance.

W. L. A.

PREFACE TO THE FIRST FRENCH EDITION.



THESE discourses are not sermons: a course of sermons on the work of salvation was certainly the occasion of their composition, but they have been modified before being committed to the press. They present a sketch of the history of redemption under its different phases, especially under the one essential phase,—the life of Jesus Christ; and I have thought that there would be an advantage in leaving to this sketch the direct and animated style of the discourse, which ill comports with dogmatic or philosophic abstractions. I have, of course, drawn abundantly from the sources of contemporary theology. The works of Neander, Lange, Ullmann, Lücke, and Sartorius, the numerous commentaries on the Gospels, as also the writings of the reformers, and, above all, Calvin's Harmony of the Gospels, I have extensively employed. I have not, however, supposed it necessary to crowd my pages with notes and references, because I have rather taken general impressions from these great theologians than made direct quotations. I pretend not to have given *a life of Jesus* from a scientific point of view; though I have had constantly in my mind the work of Strauss, the negative results of which have entered much more extensively into con-

temporary ideas than is generally believed. But the presentation of the facts of redemption as a great whole, possesses in itself an apologetic value. The revelation is proved when it is set forth in its glorious unity from the fall to the cross and the resurrection. The beauty of the sheaf is owing to the tie which binds together the separate ears of corn.

I have not entered directly on the discussion of those grave questions on which so many minds are now divided from each other—*non erat hic locus*. I wholly disapprove of the summary method, too often adopted, of cutting the knot of the most serious difficulties by an exclamation. Oratory is not argument, and this I have endeavoured to bear in mind. But, on the other hand, I have not feared plainly to indicate my views. Firmly believing in the agreement of Christianity with conscience, I have set myself to bring out that profound harmony on which, after all, every attempt to establish the truth of the Gospel among unbelievers must be founded. I have sought to give a historical demonstration of the relation pre-existing between the human soul and Christ, by showing that the Saviour was not only the free gift of God's love, but also the desire of all nations. It is with this object that I have entered at some length into that which concerns the work of preparation for Christianity; for I regard this preparation as having consisted entirely in the development of the desire of salvation. This view seems to me to throw great light on Judaism, and on its connection with the general history of humanity.

We know how sorely the agreement between conscience and revelation may be abused. It is so when the identity of the two is asserted, and nothing more

seen in revelation than a simple commentary upon conscience. Christianity is thus regarded as designed merely to revive men's recollections; and Christ descends from the rank of a revealer to that of a simple interpreter of truth already possessed. We believe that something more required to be done on earth than to remind mankind of a forgotten lesson; and that neither was Christ nor were his apostles mistaken in speaking of a redemption. The cross is not in our view simply a testimony of the Father's love, like the flowers under our feet, and the starry heavens above our heads; but the altar of the great sacrifice which restores man to God, and God to man. Christ is for us a Saviour as well as a Revealer.

A revelation which is a salvation, a work of deliverance and reconciliation, the heart of man may desire; but assuredly it does not contain it even in its deepest recesses. The hunger and thirst for salvation are in the human soul, but the bread and the water to satisfy them must come from above. Conscience is predisposed to receive a saving Christ, but it needs Him not the less on that account. This is the point of view at which we have constantly placed ourselves, as the very title of our work indicates. We no more wish to sacrifice in religion the object to the subject, than the subject to the object.

We would put far away from us that barren dogmatism which reduces religion to a series of formulas, and, recognizing no relation between conscience and revelation, insists upon that which it cannot verify. Nor less do we repudiate the absolute subjectivity that sees nought in revelation beyond the pure and simple expression of that which is in the conscience. The former system offers us a stone for bread; the latter

would feed us with our own hunger. That which in our view meets the highest necessities of man is the eternal christianity, which, from the days of the apostles to our own, has comforted and saved thousands of poor sinners—which, beginning by proclaiming the fall, leads us to the cross of Golgotha, and bids us there adore the Saviour God, seen in the fulness of His divinity. Who would dare to assert that the christian conscience has known any other christianity during eighteen centuries? Whatever be our respect for science, we maintain that it is only christian so long as it keeps within its proper limits.

I do not, certainly, put forward the absurd pretension of offering, in these few pages, the solution of the formidable problem regarding the relation of the subject to the object, of liberty to authority. I offer rather my testimony than my system; but ought we not to take into account, in this great discussion, the different manifestations of the christian conscience? Have they not in this view alone a right to be attended to, and seriously weighed? Moreover, where can we find a complete and fully organized system? We meet with separate suggestions rather than a compact body of doctrines. If we express our fears, however, with some earnestness, it is by no means with the design of committing ourselves to that theological reaction which would arrest every movement of thought; and, under the name of simplicity of faith, would condemn us to darkness. We hold this method to be dangerous in all respects. Though the gospel is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever, theology does not share in its immutability. The history of dogmas is the history of their variations, though with a certain basis of unity on essential points. The doctrines of

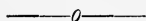
the reformation were no more definite as a scientific system than were those of the second and third centuries. We are thus engaged, like our predecessors, in an immense movement. We believe ourselves to know the point to which we are tending, which is the more profound discrimination of the human and the divine elements in the christian scheme. Roman Catholicism had sacrificed God to man by its miserable Pelagianism. The theology of the sixteenth century, by its formal and logical systematizing, made too little of the human elements, while giving the most useful impulse to modern society by a paradox, which a careful examination can explain. The mission of the third great phase of church history is to maintain both the terms of the religious problem in their respective rights, and to harmonize, as far as possible, the human and the divine, the moral and the religious elements. We are hence called to place ourselves more immediately at the centre of christianity, which has for its first principle the profound union of humanity and divinity in the person of Jesus Christ. Our object should be, by earnestly studying the Holy Scriptures, profiting by all the accumulated labours of those who have preceded us, to become more thoroughly christian in our notions, that is to say, to reject every Pagan and every Jewish element.

The task is no less perilous than extensive; but all who have eyes to see must acknowledge that it is appointed us by God. Is not the great question now in every domain that of liberty and authority? And, to speak only of religion, does not the most violent attack on christianity proceed from pantheism? And have we not in this fact a providential warning that we should strengthen ourselves at the threatened point,

and no longer sacrifice the moral, which is, after all, the divine element within us? This warning has been understood by the first theologians of our age. Neander, Tholuck, Julius Müller, Vinet, and others, have clearly pointed it out. Precious materials are already amassed for the theological reconstruction, which it has devolved on this unsettled age to accomplish; and we have the assurance that the greatest number of those who are labouring in silence are following the course which we have indicated, and are desiring, with us, to harmonize without identifying the human and the divine elements. Neither the object without the subject, nor the subject without the object—this is their motto. All this, it may be said, is vague. *It is* vague, we answer, like a problem to be solved. But we hope that the reading of these discourses will assist in determining the direction of our thoughts, and in enabling us at least to understand what are our *desiderata*. Who could better teach us the true fusion of the human and the divine than He who was the *God-man*? May we contribute, in our weakness, to render His image more real to our readers! We do not forget that the christian life is of far greater importance than theology; and it is our dearest wish to make men love Christ more through knowing Him better. Our aims are admirably expressed in those beautiful words of a great Christian man, which we take for our motto:—

Fac ut possim demonstrare,
Quam sit dulce te amare,
Tecum pati, tecum flere,
Tecum semper congaudere.

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.



THIS second edition being merely the reproduction of the first, with some few corrections of detail, I have nothing to add to the preceding pages. The state of men's minds has not changed—the same tendencies exist, perhaps even more definitely. That which I believed four years ago, I believe still. I will therefore content myself with reproducing my former preface, praying to God to make these pages conducive to the glory of His name, and the triumph of His love.

PARIS, *September 7th*, 1858.

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I.

THE FALL AND THE PROMISE.

“I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed ; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.”—Gen. iii. 15.

SINCE these words were spoken, the aspect of our world has changed indeed. It was opening then upon fallen man like a vast and dreary desert. Nothing concealed the sadness of the place of banishment. The sentence of condemnation was read alike in the heaven, now for the first time veiled, and in the hardened earth, that would only henceforth yield its harvests to persevering labour. The contrast between the blessed life of Eden and the bitterness of the curse, rendered all illusion impossible. Death was striking his first blows, sorrow shedding her first tears. An outlaw torn from his family feels a less horrible shock than did man on leaving his primitive condition. Now, although nothing is altered, it is more easy to forget the dreary reality that lies at the foundation of our being. We are farther by six thousand years from the day when the condemnation was pronounced. In one sense, indeed, that condemnation has not grown old—it resounds only the more terribly from the accumulated dust of so many generations ; but it finds a less vibrating echo in our hearts. It no longer stands, if I may so express it, bare before us, but is dressed and sometimes disguised by civilization. The

prodigious power of man over nature, often hides from us her degeneracy. Space and time are conquered. We have found for our thoughts and our volitions, instruments almost as rapid as themselves. Those who only judge of things after the appearance, might find it hard to recognize in our powerful humanity, developing its riches in immense cities, advancing by discovery after discovery in the conquest of nature, which becomes ever more and more the docile servant of its will ;—to recognize here, I say, the race of primitive man taking in tears his first steps in the desert of a cursed world. And yet man is still an outlaw—an outlaw, indeed, who may be restored to favour, but who, until he find his God again, lives under the burden of His anger. Of this we must remind you, society of the nineteenth century, society worn out, incredulous, intoxicated with your strength and with your gold, with your railroads and your riches, society corrupted and refined, becoming, in spite of tempests and of shocks, more profoundly asleep in materialism, and tempted to mistake a palace of industry for a paradise regained. In the midst of these dwellings, brilliant with luxury, in this vortex of elegant life, in this tumult of business, we find again the old Adam, the exile of former days, on whom still weighs the ancient sentence.

Civilized man, the man of the world, smiling and amiable, now surrounded by the prestige of wealth or honour, now shining with the fame of science and literature, this is the artificial man—but the real man is seen at length. He appears on the day of mourning and of death. But he only half appears even then, for death has its civilization. It is surrounded with pomp and with homage. If we would see man as he is in

reality, if we would have an exact idea of his condition since the fall, we must view him on that day which preceded all illusions and all lies, when truth had the brilliancy of lightning, on that day when he quitted Eden! The foundation of our destiny will then rise in a manner beneath our eyes, it will be laid bare before us. We shall learn to know not merely certain particular sufferings, but the great woe of humanity, and at the same time its great consolation. We shall descend into that abyss of the fall, where is found, says Pascal, the knot of every question. The little matters which frivolity fancies great—matters of industry, of art, of politics—will be lost in the question of life or death, the question of perdition or salvation! May God enable me to treat this question with all the seriousness which it deserves! I propose to develope in a series of discourses the plan of salvation, so grandly realized in Jesus Christ. Our text contains its substance. The condemnation and the promise are here set forth in grand prophetic characters. The way of banishment and the way of return open at once before us. Here is the first stage of that long road leading to the cross, and by the cross to heaven; and with a rapid glance we can see it as a whole—its thorns and its briars as well as its glorious end. By marking clearly the starting-point of the enterprise of our salvation, we shall better appreciate its nature and its greatness. We shall see how low man had fallen, how high God would raise him; and we shall understand that all in the past, the present, and the future tends to the accomplishment of this vast design. The work of Christ will unfold itself before us in its infinite proportions, and no consideration could more directly tend to the glory of His grace.

I will put enmity, said God, speaking to the serpent, between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed ; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

The serpent personifies, in our text, the power of darkness, the power of sin and death. The seed of the woman must be understood to refer to that blessed descendant, by whom, at the appointed time, humanity was to be raised from its fall. Our text teaches us then, first of all, that the earth is the scene of a perpetual conflict between the power of good and the power of evil. We have but to open our eyes to recognise that there is an incessant and mysterious strife going on here below between opposing forces. Do we not see them at war without ceasing in society, in individual life, in nature itself? Is not all trouble and agitation? Is not this world a world of contrasts and of discords? The simplest experience teaches us this sad truth, but it carries us no farther. It does not reveal to us the profound meaning of the universal struggle.

Human reason, in despair of explaining this conflict, makes it a fatal condition of all development. It considers it an enactment of divine wisdom, (when at least it believes in a personal God) that progress on the earth should be shackled with this hard law of suffering, without any conceivable motive for such an arrangement. But the Bible gives not this ironical explanation. He who reads it in faith, finds that these opposing powers are not blind forces by chance in antagonism, but free and moral powers—the power

of perdition and the power of salvation ! They follow one another and fight in the whole creation, from the soil which we tread under our feet even to the depths of our heart. The power of evil has left its trace on the earth itself, and its impure breath awakens our sinful desires. At the same time the power of love shines in the azure of heaven, in the beauties that remain to us in nature,—and it also inspires our conscience. This gigantic struggle, carried on under all skies and in all ages, in the history of nations and in that of individuals, has for its stake (if I may so express it) the immortal soul of man. You understand, my brethren, what bearing this revelation has on the events that occur in the world. Neither the history of humanity nor the history of individuals is henceforth a fantastic enigma. The cause of the whole contest is the grandest conceivable. Eternal interests are engaged in the strife. Behind the visible champions are others invisible, pursuing ever the same end,—on the one side that of hatred, on the other that of love. God has declared it : There is war between the seed of the serpent and the divine seed of the woman. With what emotion should we witness this conflict !—and perhaps it has never even entered our thoughts. Indifferent spectators of the most momentous drama, the conclusion of which has a direct influence on our eternal destiny, we have, it may be, attended only to its decorations and its incidents, or even fallen asleep, as though it were a frivolous fable ! And yet heaven and hell are awaiting its issue as regards each one of us. Shall this man be lost or saved ? The question is asked unceasingly.

But the thought naturally occurs to our minds : Wherefore this conflict ? Is it a necessary, an indis-

pensable condition of human life? Has the earth been always given up to an unrelaxing war? No, my brethren; and if you doubt of this I will conduct you to the place where the words of our text were spoken. They were spoken in Eden, at the moment, however, when it was about to close for man. Cast a rapid glance over it,—it will soon have disappeared; it will have faded as fades the pure and brilliant dawn of a sultry day. See how all is beautiful and harmonious here! What adornments on the earth not yet withered by the power of death! What brightness in the sky! What felicity! How we recognize that the might of love alone has been here, and has freely displayed itself in the generosity of its gifts!

Doubt you still? Is it difficult to believe that there was a time without war, without contention? Look at man even at the moment when God announces to him this conflict. He flies in confusion from his Father; he trembles, fears, and hides. It is because he feels that if the power of sin and death is unchained, it is the work of his own hand,—because he knows that he has himself to blame for this sad condition of conflict which was not natural to him. Imagine, then, his shame and his terror! He is still new to deceit. He has not had time to seek for words with which to impose on himself. Soon he will be contented with sophisms, and will pretend that all is normal in his condition. Place more reliance, then, on his first impressions than on his tardy reasonings. Hear in his trouble the cry—the true cry of conscience, and confess with us, that if the power of love be not alone manifested before us, it is because man has departed from his natural way.

Let us collect and examine the testimony of Scrip-

ture on this subject. . And first, if there is conflict, it is not that from eternity two opposing principles have been at work. For this supposition we should have to admit a God of evil opposed to a God of good—a God of darkness to a God of light—Ahriman to Ormuzd. This would be in effect to proclaim Atheism. What would that God be who should not be the absolute and sovereign being? Let us confess with the Bible that good alone is eternal, that it alone had no beginning. It is God himself—the God who can say, “I am that I am.” Evil, on the contrary, had a beginning. It existed neither in the Creator nor in the plan of creation. It can in no sense be attributed to God under pain of destroying the very idea of God. It can come but from the creature; and it is here, my brethren, that I ask your whole attention, for the solution of this question contains in the germ that of every other.

All that comes from the hand of God is perfect like Himself, and bears a divine impress. But among the beings whom He has created, there are some possessing a superior nature, made in His image, spiritual beings. These are not subject to mechanical laws. It is not with them as with the star which cannot quit the path on which the Sovereign hand has started it, but is held in the sky by an invincible necessity. Spiritual beings are free. Not by a physical law are they made to gravitate towards God. They are called to turn to Him freely and of themselves. In other words, they are called to love Him. Love reposes on liberty. A constrained love is not a true love. As well might we say that the earth, turning to the sun, loves the sun. It follows, then, that spiritual beings must decide freely for God, under pain of ceasing to be

spiritual beings. But how should they decide freely for God if the opportunity be not afforded them? At the moment when they leave the hand of their Creator, they are in a state of infancy. They have not yet distinguished themselves from Him. They have no consciousness of what they owe to Him. Thus are they incomplete, morally unfinished. They will not have accomplished their destiny till, by an act of will, they shall have consummated the gift of themselves to God. And for this an appeal must be made to their will. They must learn to distinguish it from that of God, in order to be able to give it back to Him. There must be a trial of their liberty; they must have to choose between love and selfishness,—a perilous choice, a dangerous trial I allow, but necessary to the full development of spiritual beings. If they issue from it victorious, then are they fixed in unity with God, without being absorbed by Him; if they fall, it is by their own fault. And thus all is to the glory of God. Such is, according to our belief, the teaching of the Bible.

If now we are told that we are making much of the liberty of the creature, we accept the reproach. If this liberty be not seriously admitted and maintained, we understand nothing either of the Gospel or of conscience, but see these two revelations sinking in the abyss of pantheism. We no longer know anything of good and evil, or of duty. The alternations of good and evil are fixed as those of day and night. Astronomy supersedes morality, and we can no more repeat the beautiful lines—

“Tous les cieux et leur splendeur
Ne valent pas, pour ta gloire
Un seul soupir d'un seul cœur.”

And let us not be told that we are exalting human pride. A strange way of doing this truly, to attribute all evil to the creature—all good to the Creator! Without the sincere acceptance of freedom it is impossible not to trace evil up to God. It is then His cause that we defend in asserting our liberty—we are jealous for His rights, which we are sometimes accused of sacrificing. Moreover liberty is a gift of God, and we maintain in it the root of all moral life. We wish to have a heart to give, because we wish to love. Many mysteries remain, and we pretend not to explain either foreknowledge or the acting of grace. We see immense shadows covering this region of the infinite. But it is not the darkness of a winter's night, the heavy darkness of fatalism. It is a night in summer, illumined with celestial splendours. Divine love shines in it like the deep azure in which the stars sparkle, and it is our faith in liberty that preserves this love pure and unassailed, prevents evil from rebounding to God, and throws it all upon the erring creature.

Think not, brethren, that we are giving way to suppositions more or less plausible. The facts of revelation are on our side. The Bible teaches us the glorious origin of that power of darkness which is personified in our text by the serpent. It is that of an archangel, to whom we may apply the words of the prophet: "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning?" The Lord has said of him that he abode not in the truth. Abode! what does that mean but that he was once in the truth. We cannot lift the veil that hides from us the history of angels; but the fall of Satan teaches us that they also have had their trial. They have been called to determine

for God. They have abode in the truth, and have attained the complete development of their being. The others See the part which Satan acted in the garden of Eden, his impatience to ruin the designs of God, to destroy His new creation. See the hatred of him whom Christ calls a murderer and a liar from the beginning; and, remembering that he was formerly one of the seraphim who approach nearest to the throne of the God of love, you will perceive the greatness of his fall, and will better understand his fearful destiny while thinking of the unheard of perversity which could from so great a height descend to so low a depth.

We now know whence comes that power of perdition which appears near man in the garden of Eden. We are thus in a position to comprehend the design of the commandment which was given to man, and which imperilled his liberty. Created in the image of God, created free, he also, like the angels, must have his probation. He is still a child, he is in a state of innocence, and needs to pass into a state of holiness. He is bound to God like the ivy that encircles the oak. A bond of love must replace this bond of nature. He is called to give himself up, to love, conscious of what he is doing. Do not complain of the danger he incurs! This would be to complain of the means offered him to fulfil his high destiny. To ask for him the impossibility of falling, were to ask for him the inert nature of the plant. The commandment of God is the trial of his liberty;—comprehend, then, its importance. God in effect places before man the most solemn question: I reveal to thee, He says, thy freedom; thou canst choose between my will and thine own—between me and thyself—me, who have loaded thee with benefits, and thyself, who, from the breath that animates thy

dust even to thine immortal soul, hast received all from me—Wilt thou love me?

You know what was man's answer to this question. No, he said by his actions, no, I will not love Thee—I will believe the first who comes rather than Thee—I will believe him though he come as Thine enemy, and that which will most allure me in his words will be the promise of supplanting Thee. Such was Adam's petty fault, as it is regarded by the world!

Seems it not, then, my brethren, that all is lost? The solemn decisive probation is ended—rebellion has repulsed and offended God in the most unworthy manner. Without doubt the miserable being who has dared to set himself up against God must go in chains of darkness to rejoin the rebellious angels. Already are these exulting, and tasting by anticipation the only joy that is possible in hell, the joy of satisfied hatred. But they are deceived. Love has resources which hatred could not foresee. Man must be punished; he shall be exiled, he shall die. The just God cannot draw back from his threatening; but, at the same time, He will pardon. Oh foolishness! Can the great God of heaven forget such an outrage; raise the crawling worm that wished to be a god; love him on the very evening of the fatal day of rebellion, and forget so far His offended dignity! Foolishness surpassing the wisdom of sages! Holy and glorious foolishness of infinite and unequalled love! Then commenced the sacrifice of the Lamb, slain, as says the Gospel, from the foundation of the world. The first manifestation of redeeming love was that very conflict now entered on between the power of good, and the power of perdition. Man deserved to be left to himself, and to death; to be

given up wholly to the angel of darkness, whom he had preferred to God. If there be a conflict then, it is because there has been a miraculous and merciful intervention of the power of love. This power could not be manifested otherwise, for the rights of divine justice cannot be abrogated. There must be reparation; and this reparation must be obtained from humanity itself. Humanity must labour for it; and, as the powers of darkness have been let loose in its heart, and in the world, this can only be effected at the price of the most persevering conflict. But the very fact of this conflict is the manifestation of God's forgiveness. It could not be conceived of as taking place in the abode of irreversible condemnation. *There* only the dreary uniformity of evil, and the fearful stillness of despair can be.

Recognize God's love, first, then, in the succession of human generations,—in the tumultuous stir of history,—in the confusion of ideas and feelings which always attends the great struggle between good and evil, between truth and error; and confess that a world of conflict is a world not abandoned by the God of love. Recognize in the rending of your heart, and the struggles of your thoughts, the presence of a merciful power. The simple fact of this conflict, which our text brings before us, ought to make us bless the God of love!

Not only, moreover, is the war announced, but also its issue; it was said to the serpent, *The seed of the woman shall bruise thy head.* It was not possible that the power of evil should triumph over the power of good. Love is more indefatigable than hatred. It is never weary; it never seeks its own satisfaction,—the more unhappy and destitute be its object, the more

does its infinite compassion shine forth. Fear not, then, that the merciful power will yield the ground to the malevolent one. It will but display itself the more because this world is a world of sorrow. Let us not forget that it is God who speaks. It is He who, with a word, created the world, and whose breath maintains universal life. It is He, above all, who made the heart of man, who knows all its springs, who has preserved for Himself a witness in the depths of the human soul. It is the all-powerful Father, who holds in His hand all the threads of our moral being by which to draw us. Besides, He has promised, and this promise was the worst punishment of the tempter. He pronounced it on the first day of history ; He repeated it by the mouth of His Son, when a second phase of history was inaugurated, declaring that the gates of hell should not prevail against His Church. Thus we advance under the blessing of a promise of victory. Let us never forget this. The worst device of the enemy is to deprive us of the recollection. Take care that your unbelief do not give the lie to God. The power of evil fortifies itself with all the strength that you attribute to it. It profits by your supposition to cast down your trembling soul. Never assist it then so far as to believe in the possibility of its triumph. When it appears to you to have achieved a decided conquest in society—when truth and justice seem to be stifled by error, hypocrisy, and unrighteousness—when your moral sense is grievously chafed by the success of evil and by its insolent joy : in the name of the promise of early days, let not your faith in goodness and justice be shaken ; doubt not their ultimate victory. If the religious society—the Church, appears to you well nigh asleep ; if superstition,

heresy, materialism—that subtle venom of the serpent—have disfigured the Gospel of God; if the difficulties of reform seem to you almost insurmountable: in the name of the promise of early days, believe in a blessed renewal, a salutary purification. Doubt not of the victory. And finally, if, in your individual life, assailed by temptations, surrounded with snares, pursued by the seductions of a corrupt world, you imagine yourself about to yield, and cry, The combat is too severe, the temptation too strong—then take courage in the name of the promise of early days. Rely on Him who has promised to fight within you. Doubt not of the victory. Never in our sad life was it more necessary to draw from this first of promises hope and consolation. It is destined to be for us in our long journey through the desert what the bright cloud was for Israel. Let it now illumine our gloomy road. There is no dark way that it has not brightened. Did it not cheer the first descent of man into the valley of probation? When did the serpent lift its head with more appearance of victory than on the day when sinful man, seduced by it, fled from his God among the trees of the garden? And yet it was then told that its head should be bruised. Let the comfort that sufficed for that day—that saddest of days, suffice for us now.

Our text not only reveals to us the great strife between good and evil and its issue, but also teaches us what is the principal weapon employed. Singularly the weapon is the same on both sides. It is wielded with directly opposite intentions, but it is in the hand of both the combatants. This weapon is *suffering*. God said to the serpent: “Thou shalt bruise the head of the seed of the woman.” This image represents the

unnumbered woes which are the result of the condemnation,—woes which wound our souls, by God's grace, but not mortally, as is figuratively expressed by the bruising of the heel. They might have seemed a striking proof of the victory of Satan; but it has been found that these afflictions—I speak of afflictions generally, not of those only which are endured by the servants of God—have contributed in the most efficacious way to secure the triumph of divine love, and to prepare for its supreme manifestation in Jesus Christ. External prosperity in sin conduces to harden, but suffering breaks the heart. On the one side no doubt it serves the justice of God, but it no less serves His love. Moreover, the attributes of God constitute an essential unity. Love cannot be separated from justice, nor justice from love. Rejoice not, then, Satan, that man is driven from Eden. Nothing would have better promoted thy dark designs than the possession of this delightful dwelling-place after the fall. There thou mightest have counted on success. But now exile and bitterness will melt his pride. Soon will the sigh and the tear chase the blasphemy from his faded lips. It is not thy cursed angels who guard the entrance to the terrestrial paradise. It is the seraphim of the God of love, and their sword reminds us that He is a consuming fire. If the earth is covered with thorns and thistles, it is not only because it is the scene of condemnation, but also because it is the scene of preparation and of salutary discipline. Every time that man eats his bread in the sweat of his brow, he will be reminded of his sad destiny, and the moment will arrive when in spite of thee all these accumulated labours and sorrows shall impel him to cry to God in his distress. Only wound him, thou wilt but cause

him to fly more rapidly towards the Deliverer. Thou thoughtest to conquer on seeing his tears flow, and lo, the first words of thy mighty adversary are these: "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted."

How does this view of affliction tend to strengthen us! In every sorrow justice and mercy meet. Let us seek to discern the hand of justice which strikes us for our rebellion, and the hand of love which in striking knocks at the door of our hearts. Who would not learn resignation, from the certainty that affliction is the special weapon of the power of love? Who would not willingly be pierced by that blessed sword which is fatal only for the power of perdition? Every time we feel its sharp point let us believe that we were about to yield to the attack of our enemy, and that the warning stroke has saved us from a defeat that might have been final. Yes; it is affliction which, throughout our spiritual life, has caused the power of salvation to prevail within us over the power of perdition. It is this which has detached us from the vanities of time, which has aroused us from our moral slumber, and made us exclaim, My soul thirsteth for God. It is this which has caused us to experience the drought of summer of which the psalmist speaks, which has broken our bones, brought us into the dust of death, and prepared us to utter the cry: Lord, save us, we perish. A mysterious messenger sent to the prodigal son, it has brought him back to his father overwhelmed, with garments soiled and torn. And at the very hour that we have found our Father, our grief, spiritualized, ennobled, changed into sorrow for sin, has drawn from our eyes the tears of repentance. It has preceded and caused our recovery. Ever since

the day of reconciliation, trial, like the angel of God who aroused St. Peter, has been our guardian angel ; and this austere companion of our journey will leave us only on the threshold of the city above where they weep not, because they sin no more. Thus does our individual experience support the general statement that we have verified. The wound of sorrow precedes, accompanies, and perfects the work of salvation.

But it is time to speak of this work itself, without which all that we have been saying would be devoid of meaning. And it is here that we come to the grandest part of our subject. How has this work been accomplished? By the greatest of sufferings ; it could be achieved in no other way. Satan is not contented with the afflictions which are the natural result of sin. He pursues with his murderous assaults all the people of God. In tracing the religious history of humanity we shall see that if the adversary seeks to retain his own adherents by worldly enjoyments, he tries at the same time to weaken and conquer the friends of God by persecution. But he has always grossly failed in this attempt. The weapon has returned against himself, for affliction has constantly furthered and honoured the cause of God. The evil one has fallen into the snare that he had made. But never was he more signally foiled than when attacking Him who was in a peculiar sense the Man of God. He brought to bear upon Him all conceivable afflictions. He wounded Him in the heel with his sharpest darts. But he found that that very wounded heel crushed his head. This was suffering truly salutary and victorious. The sufferings of which we have spoken would have had no utility without those of

the Redeemer. They have no expiatory value, because they are more or less impure, like all that pertains to man. All the tears that have watered the earth, all the blood that has flowed on it, all afflictions general and special, more numerous than the sand of the sea, could not efface one of the sins committed by the descendants of Adam. God desires not our tears but our heart. This heart has been taken from Him and must be restored to Him again. It has been taken from Him by an act of rebellion; it must be restored by an act of obedience, and this can be nothing but a sacrifice unto death. For the will of God is not now to be accepted under the blessed conditions of Eden, but under the unfavourable conditions of condemnation,—that is to say, all the consequences of condemnation must be accepted and accepted freely, without being deserved. There must be obedience unto death, because death is the destiny of the sons of Adam. Suffering is, then, the indispensable condition of salvation, without which it could not be effected. This death has been endured—salvation has been wrought out; and now our own sufferings have a blessed effect in preparing us to desire and to receive it.

Who, then, is that descendant of the woman destined to realize the promise? Look again at our text, for it answers this question also: "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed." The combat is, as we have said, between the power of perdition and the power of love, between Satan and God. But these two powers do not fight directly one with the other. Both have their champions. The seed of the serpent fights against the children of God—and both must be sought among the sons of

Adam. Humanity is divided into two portions—one of which is so assimilated by the power of darkness as to be called the *seed* of the serpent; the other is so assimilated by the power of divine love as to become its incarnation. Nor could it be otherwise. Man as a free being could not be the prize of a combat in which he had not mingled. Satan can only triumph over man through man;—all the legions of fallen angels are of less value to him, than a single man enrolled under his standard. Nor could the work of salvation be accomplished without our help. It is humanity that has forsaken God. It must itself return to Him, it must offer the sacrifice of reparation. But it cannot certainly do this by itself, for it is sold under sin, and is its slave. Thus when God promises that the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head, He engages for a sovereign intervention in the work of our salvation; He promises a complete assimilation of humanity by Himself, and observe here, that I do not speak only of a moral, but of a positive assimilation, and I know no method by which this could be effected save the incarnation of the Son. But it is no less true, that the Son must be indeed man not only through the flesh, which He borrowed from humanity, but also by a moral tie contracted with the race. He must represent it, and be one with it, at least with that portion not given up to Satan. He must spring not only from the flesh of humanity, but also from its broken heart. If Jesus Christ was marvellously born of a woman, He was no less marvellously begotten in the soul of humanity. The desire which it felt for a Saviour was a seed of God.

And this divine seed was deposited in the heart of all the saints who prepared for the advent of Christ.

The power of love thus gradually assimilated humanity to itself, and the men who assisted in this blessed preparation, were from the beginning of the world designated as the sons of God—they represent the divine seed. This seed attained not at first its full development. Four thousand years of conflict were necessary, because the seed of the serpent was also being developed in opposition, that is to say satanic humanity was striving unceasingly to stifle the seed divine. It would be ungrateful in us to forget this conflict, the struggle of so many generations to prepare for the coming of Christ. Many sons of God, such as are mentioned in Genesis, were needed before the only Son of God was born—He in whom dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily; before it could be said, “unto us a child is born”—the child of God most high, and the child also of our prayers, our tears, and our desires—desires which constituted the divine seed deposited in us by the Spirit of God.

It is to this preparation, this gradual development of the seed of the woman, that we would now call your attention while we trace the great outline of its history. This will be the object of our next discourse. We shall find the contest between the two powers of the commencement of which we have spoken, acquiring a new degree of energy. It is no longer merely a war between good and evil, but it concerns the coming of the Saviour, the seed of the devil seeking to stifle in its blessed germ the salvation of the human race. But the woman's posterity still preserves and develops that germ under the action of the Spirit of God, until the day when it shall arrive at maturity in the incarnation, and the triumph of the power of love shall be consummated. We shall see the power

of perdition pursuing a parallel development; and in the day of the full assimilation of humanity to God, assimilating rebellious humanity more completely to itself, so that it would seem as if Satan were fighting in person, without any intermediate agency. Thus has our text really given us the theme, which history has only developed. The great universal conflict is indicated by the words, "I will put enmity between thy seed and the seed of the woman." The final triumph appears in the result: "The seed of the woman shall bruise thy head." The condition of this triumph is also set forth: "Thou shalt bruise his heel." In suffering the triumph is prepared; and by a great sacrifice it is consummated. The champions on both sides are men. God in humanity, communicating Himself to it entirely in the person of His Son, the divine seed of the woman, is to crush Satan who is also present in humanity. Such is the magnificent scheme unfolded before us in our text. Oh that I may have succeeded in exciting within you the admiration with which it has inspired myself!

But it is not admiration of the divine scheme which I especially demand from you in closing this discourse. I desire to leave you under a more serious impression. Have you considered the opposition which our text indicates between the seed of the serpent, and the posterity of the woman? It seems to imply that those who serve the serpent are not truly a portion of humanity. The true humanity, the seed of the woman, is the divine humanity, that which fights for God. It alone answers to the true idea of humanity such as it is in the thought of the Creator. It alone serves the interests of the fallen race. You who are allied to the enemy and murderer of your kind, who

are his accomplices in achieving its ruin, it is right in disowning you. You are not the woman's seed, but the seed of the serpent. You appear, indeed, to espouse the cause of humanity with ardour—you have its name ever on your lips—you assert its dignity, its greatness, sometimes even its divinity;—such was Satan's language on the day of the fall. Flatterers of human pride, you borrow his envenomed words. I know no more severe condemnation for you than the simple words of my text, which shew you to be so assimilated to the power of perdition that you are no longer members of the human race, but the seed of the serpent. True humanity, the true posterity of the woman, this is found among those who speak more of degeneracy than of greatness—more of our misery than our dignity. Their language is opposed to that of the serpent. They are the posterity of the woman because they are the children of God; and because, as the apostle says, humanity is in its essence of a divine race. The nearer it approaches to God by humility, the more is it permitted to realize its high destiny. You, then, who have thought to serve it apart from the religion of the humble, be undeceived. You have opposed its highest interests—you have served the power of perdition: but remember that you are not disinherited by nature; that one movement of faith and humility will carry you over to the camp of God! Alas for you if, with generous ideas, and a sincere desire to do good to your fellow-men, it should appear, at last, that you have been lending your aid to their greatest enemy. He is not only a murderer, but a liar also. He has imposed on you, perhaps, through your noblest instincts. Oh, then, while yet there is time, in the name of your brethren's

welfare, in the name of your own salvation, take the side of God in the great and solemn conflict. This will be to take the side of man. There is identity in the two causes. How should not the interests of eternal love be also those of fallen man? Let us all, whoever we may be, take our side. Our text shows us but two camps. There is no intermediate position. We must either be ourselves of the serpent's seed, or else labour with the seed of the woman to bruise his head. Christians, you do not hesitate,—you have already chosen your chief. But remember that to sustain efficiently this formidable combat, you will have need of all your strength, and all your time. Take everything that you possess and cast it into the current of good. If you bring thither but your drop of water you will not be useless; but dread, above all things, to swell, by a single word, a single action, the current of evil which rolls its waters near us. Agents enough are engaged for the misery of humanity—work ye for its salvation; ever fearful of aiding the old serpent in his deadly designs, and ever leaning upon Him who has already gloriously fulfilled the promise of our text, and who is ever ready to accomplish it anew for each one of us.

II.

THE PREPARATION FOR THE COMING OF JESUS CHRIST.

Discourse I.

BEFORE JUDAISM.

“In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.”—GEN. xii. 3.

IN our last discourse we have seen that the strife everywhere waged in this world, in the outer world as in the inner, was in reality the great war of the power of love against the power of darkness. We know beforehand that the triumph of God has been secured at the price of inexpressible suffering; and it will be all the more decisive a victory for having been disputed. We know also that it will be won by humanity; but by humanity fully assimilated by God: in other words, by the God-man; the blessed seed of the woman bruising the serpent's head. I have now to speak to you of the work of preparation by which the great victory of the power of love was gradually brought about. Our text indicates the most characteristic feature of this work. It was said to Abraham that all the families of the earth should be blessed in his posterity. The election of a special people by God is revealed in these words. Now this election is

the most important fact that marks the period of preparation. You may, perhaps, feel a certain difficulty in understanding how the promise made to Abraham is to be reconciled with that which was made to Adam. Is there not a contracting of the promise of Eden? That spoke of the seed of the woman, and now it is only the seed of Abraham. How are we to reconcile these two expressions, alike employed by God? We shall have to resolve this difficult and important question. We shall shew you that the second promise contributed to the accomplishment of the first; and that the election of a people of God was an efficacious means of preparing for the coming of the Saviour. The old covenant had no other object than that of hastening the full realization of salvation. It was destined to prepare humanity for salvation by its series of revelations. This view is the only one that gives us a key to the Old Testament, which has often proved a stone of stumbling to men who have joyfully accepted the Gospel revelation. And whence has their more or less scandalized astonishment arisen? From the differences which they found between the two Testaments. But are not these differences perfectly natural and comprehensible directly we admit that the Old Testament speaks to us of the preparation for salvation, while the New Testament tells of its realization? It is not matter of surprise if the first steps of the ladder which connects earth with heaven be nearer to the earth than the higher steps which lose themselves in the very light of heaven. Are they not admirably adapted to the weakness of the human creature? To complain that less spirituality is found in the Old Testament than in the New—in the first pages of the Bible than in the last, this is to

complain that the celestial Father has spoken in an intelligible manner to the child man. When we recognize a preparation for salvation, then we understand that the education of humanity, like that of the individual, has been progressive, and that the revelations of God must not be viewed in the mass but in their chain and succession. There has been a development, a history of revelation. The strange form in which its teachings are sometimes clothed, instead of shocking us ought to affect us, as does the sight of a father stooping to lift to himself his new-born son.

This point of view gives to the Old Testament the most beautiful, the richest unity. Jesus Christ is at the foundation of each narrative, of every page. He is the end towards which all aspires; there is not an institution which does not tend to Him. It is, as He Himself said, His day which is rising, at first well nigh imperceptible, like the earliest light of dawn, then more and more brilliant. He who knows not that the dawn from above is beginning to shoot forth in these first rays, regards them with no great attention. But what admiration fills the heart of those who watch in the first pages of the Sacred Book the rising of the heavenly day! If, in the reflections which we are about to present to you, we could help to lift the veil which hides Moses not only from the Jews, but also from a great number of Christians, we should believe that we had laboured successfully for your edification and for the glory of our God.

Wherein, then, was to consist the work of preparation? Let us understand this point first of all. It is the only way to comprehend the design and the bearing of the election of a special people. We have already seen that the Saviour must be not only the

Son of God, but also the Son of man,—that He must represent God to humanity and humanity to God. This means not simply that He was to take a body like ours. It was necessary that being the Son of God most holy, He should be morally the Son of man also. In what sense must we understand these words? Is it that humanity was called by its own might to produce the Saviour? Nay, my brethren; and here lies the great error of human religions and philosophies. To produce the Saviour, that is to save ourselves—to save ourselves by the unfolding of human faculties:—such is the pretension of pride. It is an impious and mad pretension, which consists in looking for salvation in perdition, and seeking the remedy in the poison which requires to be counteracted. We assert strongly that, left to his own resources, man can produce nothing. We deceive ourselves. The apostle James teaches us what man obtains from himself: “When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.”¹ Death—death in every sense; this is what humanity, abandoned to itself, has drawn from its own bosom since the fall. It is not for it, then, to produce the Saviour. The Saviour can be but a free gift of God. The promise can be accomplished only by Him who made it. But we must not fall into the opposite extreme to that which we have combated. And we should be doing this by representing the Saviour as descending suddenly from heaven, transforming thus the greatest of events into an unexpected incident, without any relation to that by which it was preceded,—by denying the human filiation of Him who has been called “the seed of the woman.”

¹ James i. 15.

We know to what this filiation is restricted. To say that man is incapable of producing the Saviour is to say that he has no creating part in the birth of the divine descendant of the woman. He has only to receive the gift of God. The vocation of the Creator is to give—a vocation which in His free love He has willingly chosen. He is, as the apostle says, the Author of every gift. The vocation of the creature is to receive. The Creator gives—the creature receives His gifts; this is the normal order. That which is true of the divers gifts of love divine, is true of its supreme gift, the gift of the Saviour. Humanity has only to receive the Saviour, but then it must receive Him.

God has from eternity begotten His Son; but in order that this eternal Son should become the posterity of the woman, the Son of man, it was necessary that God should find in humanity the dispositions requisite for assimilating to itself the celestial gift, the seed divine. The miraculous conception of Jesus Christ is to us the most positive of realities. We beware of transforming into symbols the facts of the Gospel history, but it is not the less true that the great fact of which we speak is also a sublime type. It represents to us in their reciprocal relations the part of God and the part of man in the coming of the Saviour. God who gives, humanity which receives, which assimilates. The external miracle reveals an internal one, and the latter has cost more, if we may speak thus, than the former. It required but one short moment for Jesus Christ to be conceived in the virgin's womb—it required four thousand years for the soul of man to be formed by the power of the Spirit to receive the Saviour. The material world is transformed a thousand times more quickly

than the spiritual world, because the will is not changed like matter, but must be won over and persuaded. Absolutely to isolate the miracle of the incarnation would be to impoverish the work of our salvation. Without the incarnation the work of preparation would have been useless; but without the work of preparation the incarnation would have been only an external fact, a miracle in empty space. The proof of this is found in the delay of the birth of Christ. The hour for the outward miracle sounded in the heart of man.

To whom, then, are we to attribute this double miracle? To whom, if not to God? God not only gives the Saviour, but He gives the power of receiving Him. He is not only the author of every gift, but He also purifies and develops the human soul, without ever destroying its freedom,—He inclines it towards Himself. Thus may we say with the apostle, addressing man,—“What hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory?” And when I speak of humanity you must not forget that we have distinguished two humanities—that which is satanic, which has willingly become the seed of the serpent; and that which is after God, which responds to His love. The latter is always in the minority. It is sometimes reduced to one family—to a few chosen ones. But it matters little, it is still the humanity which is after God, that which realizes His plans, and from it in every sense must come the Saviour.

We are now in a position to determine with exactness, what the work of preparation was. It consisted on the part of God in developing in man the dispositions most favourable for receiving His gifts, and espe-

cially the greatest of his gifts—the Saviour of the world. If you ask what were these dispositions that required to be developed, I will appeal to your own experience. When are you best disposed to receive any gift? Is it not when you have first desired it? If you do not desire it, you either refuse it or receive it with indifference. But if you have long sighed after any good, if its attainment has inflamed your desire, then when this good is offered to you, with what ardour do you seize it—with what joy do you take possession of it! Thus, then, humanity will be prepared to receive the Saviour in that measure, in which the desire for the Saviour shall have been kindled in its heart. If it desire Him feebly, or at best only in a vague and general manner, it will not be ready to appropriate Him. He would remain a stranger, He would be as it were outside of humanity if He appeared during the period of its languid desire. When the desire has become at once more precise and more intense, humanity will be better disposed to seize—to embrace the Saviour as its treasure,—to incorporate itself with Him. But when the desire has attained its full intensity, when humanity feels that it cannot do without the Saviour; when it calls for Him with its every voice, its every tear, then if He appear it will cry aloud, *By this I know Him*, that He is flesh of my flesh, bone of my bone, soul of my soul. It will unite itself closely to Him—it will be His as He will be its own—He will be truly the Son of man. Thus, to kindle, to encourage, to develop this holy desire for the Saviour, this is the whole work of divine preparation.

But we must go farther into this, which is the fundamental thought of our discourse, and which seems to us to cast a vivid light on the Old Testament. The

more closely we consider it, the more will it grow bright before our mind. Since the work of preparation consists in developing the faculty receptive of the gifts of God, that is to say the desire of salvation, what is the best method of developing this desire? I appeal once more to you, my brethren, for I do not wish to lose myself in vain reasonings. I wish to ground all on experience. I discover in each one of our desires, whatever be the object to which it points, two feelings—first, one of want and suffering. We wish for a good, because we feel that is lacking to us—lacking to our happiness; if we had all that was necessary to us, if our felicity were absolute, it is evident that we should form no desire at all. Every desire is accompanied by a sigh. In the second place, there is found in it also a certain hope. If we had not the idea that the good wished for might be granted us, our desires would be stifled in their germ, or rather they would turn against us and devour our heart. Desires not sustained by the breath of hope fall to the ground. An impossible desire ought not to be called desire but despair. Thus the sting of suffering awakens desire—the wing of hope sustains it. Suffering and hope—these are the two elements which are fused in each of our desires. We shall find them both in the desire for the Saviour. Man will only call for the great Deliverer when he shall have bitterly felt the void of a life without God. And he will only raise his eyes towards heaven when he shall have the hope of seeing that heaven one day open to give a Redeemer to the earth. To say that God wished to develop the desire of salvation in humanity, is to say that He wished to develop both the great sorrow of condemnation and the great hope of deliverance. You will see all the revelations of the

ancient covenant tend to this double object ; with the one hand God strikes the rebel race, strikes it with terrible and redoubled blows, and with the other He lifts it up to shew it the end to which it is tending, though with fall after fall, humiliation after humiliation. Each new phase of revelation is marked by a new and more resounding stroke from the rod of condemnation, and by a more radiant vista of the promised future. The last phase will shew us the humiliation of humanity carried out to its extreme shame and its most frightful chastisements, and also the soaring of a magnificent and universal hope. And if so many phases succeed one another, if so many generations disappear before the blessed one to which the Saviour shall belong, be not astonished. God alone is not at work. The enemy is working against Him, sprinkling with tares the half-sown field. The enemy is working, aided by a multitude of misguided men. To each new display of celestial love there corresponds an unfolding of the hatred of hell. Hence the apparently interminable succession of revelations. Every time that Satan and his agents strive to overthrow the plan of God this plan expands, and some new manifestation of divine love comes forth from its treasures. Far from being scandalized at the innumerable ages that preceded the coming of Christ, take occasion from the fact to praise the love of your God. Recognize the unwearying goodness that He has shewn you in waiting through so many years in spite of your rebellion and your indifference. And complain not that we detain you on the threshold of the gospel history, while we unroll for you the work of preparation. God, the great God of heaven, remained there Himself during more than forty centuries, knocking at the door of the human heart.

The delay of which you perhaps complain is the delay of His anger in bursting over you. O patience of my God, thou art not the least admirable, the least touching of His mercies !

Let us now trace the work of preparation in its great outline. This work is twofold. God developed the desire of salvation by events, and by revelations granted to those who were serving His designs. We have to shew how these events and these institutions gradually increased the sorrow of condemnation and the hope of deliverance, till the moment when the two feelings were blended as it were in the positive arrival of the Saviour. At present we shall speak only of the early phases of revelation.

Let us first consider the situation of man after he had received the promise of pardon. You will perceive with us that the plan of God received in this promise its first realization. And as the essential features of man's situation are repeated still in every human life, you will have cause in your own name to bless the merciful hand of the Lord for those general dispensations of His love common to us all, which too often escape our attention.

Contemplate this divine love first, as shewn in the dwelling-place of fallen man. We may say of the entire world, what the Psalmist said of the starry sky : "There is no speech nor language, and yet its voice is heard."¹ This voice conveys to us a word of condemnation and a promise of pardon ; received by the faithful heart it forms itself into a sigh after Christ. Oh ! I know well that it is too rarely heard. I know well that nature, given up to man's inspiration, is made by him to speak the language of his own corruption, that he

¹ Psalm xix. 3.

asks from her a guilty intoxication, and willingly surrenders himself to her fascinations. Nothing is more dangerous than that luxurious contemplation of the outer world which enervates the soul, and robs it of the power of self-control.

There are two ways of turning into poison the noble enjoyment of nature. The first is to allow one's self to be ruled by her and absorbed in her—this is a pantheistic admiration of nature. It deifies and adores her—it is a pure and simple idolatry which takes us out of ourselves. There is another way of loving nature, which, though directly opposed to the former, is not less treacherous. We mean a selfish admiration—seeking in her a mirror for our own impressions, whether mournful or joyous—making her a great harp to reproduce our faintest emotions—degrading her to act this mean part, and asking from her the subtle enjoyments of a sickly egotism. You constantly find in the literature of our day this double error removing man from God. Man thus makes nature his accomplice in the work of his own destruction. Need we say that such is not the purpose for which God has designed her. When we draw evil impressions from nature, we are turning a gift of God against ourselves. God speaks through nature. He says to us by her unnumbered voices, *Thou needest a Saviour, and He is not far from thee.* Nature is a witness on the side of truth, and we have no right to deprive ourselves of her testimony. Given, as it is, under every sky, but continually misinterpreted by man's folly, it is most important that we should penetrate to its true and divine meaning.

Fear not that we are allowing ourselves the easy gratification of accumulating poetical descriptions. It

is not a matter of poetry but of truth and of salvation. What did the first man, when driven from Eden, see in the external world? He found a confirmation of his own destiny, which he read in the vast book of nature. That destiny was twofold—the curse weighed on him, but it was lightened by the promise of pardon. Was not the curse written all around him in the changed condition of the earth, overthrown, darkened, reluctant to supply food, but yielding thorns in abundance? Did he not see it sadly realized in that power of destruction which was trying its hand on the animals before attacking himself? Did he not hear the tempest mutter it in the air? All those fearful spectacles which the earth presents, did they not cry to him with one voice: Thou art condemned! thou hast sinned! And on the other hand, the exquisite beauty still remaining on our poor earth, the harmony, the grandeur, the marvellous days of which each year keeps a reserve, the enchanted spots sublime or lovely, all these reminiscences of the former earth, did they not tell of love divine? Do they not still say to man,—Fear not, poor fallen creature—thou art not abandoned—there is yet hope?

Thou hast sinned,—but hope still: these are the two sayings that predominate in the vast murmur of nature. But these two sayings are both echoes of revelation. Let us then no more be told that nature is a deist, and speaks only of the Creator. She speaks of the Saviour also. It is therefore that He has borrowed from her so many parables and teachings. "The whole creation," says the apostle, "groaneth together until now, waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God." This groan, this desire of salvation, comes from irrational nature, only that it may penetrate into our hearts, and help thus in the great

work of preparation, which tends simply to develop the desire of the Saviour in man. Oh that he may not remain deaf to the universal sigh, but may see in the spectacle which earth presents, an invitation to turn to the Saviour God! He will then find a blessing in that which, through his own fault, once brought him only temptation.

If the external world speaks to man of sin and of pardon, his own nature still more fully tells him of the same. There are two facts in the outward life of humanity that bring to us the twofold message of nature. The first of these facts is death. What a preacher of the justice of God! How well is its dreadful eloquence adapted to remind us of our condemnation! It walks unceasingly through our streets and our dwellings, repeating over the inanimate remains of our fellowmen the original sentence, giving to all the tempter's lies the most glaring contradiction; and yet in the very face of such crushing evidence we still yield to the suggestions of the spirit of pride. Yes, there are men even in our day who seek to be as gods, and suffer themselves to be deluded by the very words which seduced the first man. We can understand that before death existed illusion was possible. But for any one now to think that he could succeed in the impious attempt to be equal with God, this is insanity. Man equal with God! And hast thou not then seen thy pretended god such as death has made him? Hast thou not seen him first silent and immovable, soon dust and ashes—the very image of weakness and corruption? Which of you has not witnessed this doleful spectacle of the annihilation of every hope of human pride? To us, indeed, Christians, death presents itself softened and embellished.

There is, through Christ, something angelic in it, but let us not forget its original character. Let us not cease to see in it the humiliation of humiliations, the response of the Creator to the insolent defiance of the creature. Let it remain the king of terrors for all that are not in Christ. Let us oppose that tendency of human philosophy which lends its reasonings to worldly levity, and sees in death only a natural fact, to which it is needful to become accustomed. Let us say aloud that it is a fearful thing, and contrary to nature, that the immortal creature should be compelled to die—that it is an overturning of his destiny! Let death thus unfold before our eyes condemnation in all its consequences, and carry us back to the sin in which it had its birth! Then will it fulfil its mission, and lead us, through sorrow and fear, to seek for deliverance.

But the word of love and hope, who will bring us that, my brethren? for we need it sorely. The feeling of condemnation must be tempered by a sweet hope. The word of love sounds in the first cry of every new-born child. What does that cry teach us but that humanity is not a race irretrievably devoted to the power of death and destruction? If the condemnation were absolute it is evident that there would not be a succession of generations on the cursed earth. Can we imagine the God of love multiplying beings devoted beforehand to perdition, and only coming out of nothingness to sink into hell? In the abode of the second death is there birth? Have demons a posterity? From the fact that God permits the multiplication of humanity we may conclude that He wishes to save men, and to use them for His merciful designs. Thus is each new-born child a witness of His

love. Before the coming of Christ man was thus reminded of the promised divine child that was to be born for the deliverance of humanity. Since Christ's coming we are reminded of the accomplishment of the great prediction. We may apply in this sense those words of the Psalmist : "Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings Thou hast perfected praise." Thou seemest to say to us through them, Unto you the child is born. They lead us to the manger of Bethlehem, to the humble entrance of the Eternal Son into our poor world.

This message of condemnation and of love, which echoes for our soul in the two most striking facts of the outward life of man—birth and death—we might call you to hear also in all the circumstances of life, in that mingling of joys and sorrows, of good and evil, of labour and success, which forms its universal tissue. But we hasten to make you listen for it in the higher life of man. It is here that contrasts abound indeed. Beneath the marks of corruption are found the traces of a high origin. The workings of selfishness are followed by some sudden impulse of generosity. To-day the heart appears buried in the dust of this world, —to-morrow it will be disturbed by a thirst after the infinite. All this is because the moral condition of man since the fall has not been a simple condition. Sin has changed all—spoiled all,—but it has not absolutely destroyed our original nature. This is in accordance with the doctrine of the Bible. The apostle Paul explicitly recognizes that fallen humanity is of a divine race. But we must hasten to say, that the soul of man is indeed fundamentally corrupted,—that it can present to God no acceptable service,—and that by itself it has no hope of salvation. Let us add, that if the well-nigh extinguished flax still smoke

—if the bruised reed be not quite broken,—it is to the grace of God that we must attribute it—to that sovereign grace which from the very day of the fall commenced its work of restoration. The idea that after the fall man retained no vestige of his origin,—that he is not only dead in sins in such a sense that he cannot participate in salvation before conversion, but also that he is in a state of absolute moral insensibility—of total hardness,—deaf as a stone to the voice of God,—this idea is founded neither on the Bible nor on experience. It restricts the work of salvation by limiting it to a moment of time—denying the preparative action of grace which works on the heart of every man. It represents the work as a mechanical and external one. It renders useless all appeals to the conscience. According to it we should have nothing serious or useful to do in intreating the sinner to be converted. Far from his pride being thus overthrown, it is confirmed, all the responsibility of his unbelief being taken from him. We frankly confess to you, brethren, that on the day when we should adopt such a notion we would descend from our pulpit for ever, preaching having become an anomaly in the Church! But mark well that we do not efface from the holy writings any of the severe words by which they depict our condition. No, we say with them, that there is none righteous, no, not one—that we have drunk iniquity like water—that the ox knoweth his master's crib, while we have forgotten our God—that from the sole of the foot even to the head there is no soundness in man.

To those who think this picture overdrawn we would say,—Open your eyes and see! Look around you, mark all the disgrace, the infamy, the meanness, the

corruption of poor humanity, such as it were a crime even to describe. Contemplate your own selves! Think of what you alone know;—each of you has his own mysteries of iniquity. To convince you of your debasement I need not single out your worst actions—the good ones will suffice. You know what have too generally been their motives,—how often, while you have been applauded, you have been at heart interested and selfish. I need not speak even of your actions. I may appeal to the secrets of your hearts and your thoughts. Not one of you would consent that the inner depths of his being should be brought under the full light of day. The lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, the pride of life, have penetrated and poisoned your innermost nature. So much for the dark side of the inner life. As to its other side we cannot call it bright—it is too much stained by sin. But still is it not true that there are in you aspirations after something better than this passing life—a need of truth, and of peace,—even, at certain moments, a sigh after God, or, at least, a mysterious sadness without any apparent cause? Are there not some chords besides those of self-interest that vibrate within you? Or, if these are broken by your own fault, have you not admired in others, acts of spontaneous devotion which shone in their life like lightning from heaven? What mean these contrasts? You have within you a voice of God that explains them, the voice of that conscience which is one of the best proofs that man though fallen is not absolutely hardened. What less than our fall does conscience declare? “Be silent,” it says to the reasonings by which you may be trying to disprove the fall—“be silent—remember what thou art, not thine apparent, but thy true, thy real self! Thou art under con-

demnation, and thou knowest it well. Thou tremblest when alone with me." But conscience has also words more consoling. It urges us towards God—it gives us the hope of salvation, which has everywhere impelled humanity to seek Him. Thus this contrast, this discord in the higher life of man, conveys to us the word of condemnation and the word of hope. We may sum up our thoughts on this subject in these words of Pascal's, who founded his *Apology for Christianity* chiefly on the strange contrasts in our nature—"If thou exalt thyself," he says to man, "I abase thee. If thou abase thyself, I exalt thee." If thou exalt thyself I abase thee by shewing thee thy corruption and thy nothingness. If thou abase thyself by denying thy origin and thy destiny, I exalt thee by pointing out the remains of thy greatness. From thine abasement I draw a proof of thy condemnation and of thy need of a Saviour. From thine exaltation I draw a proof that salvation is reserved for thee by Him who has not permitted that thy degradation should be total. The abasement and the exaltation concur to form within thee that desire for the Christ which prepares thee to receive Him!

Will you not then hear at last this appeal of divine love, ye, who, until now, have refused to believe the Gospel? You have not wished to accept it, because it tells you of your misery and of the grace of God. But these, the two principal dogmas of Christianity—the offences to your pride—you encounter everywhere. Nature proclaims them with all her voices—history unfolds them before your eyes, and you are yourselves the unanswerable witnesses to their truth—you cannot escape from the revelation. If you were at the end of the world it would start up again under

your eyes. You cannot escape from it, but in escaping from yourselves. To destroy the Bible will not rid you of it. You must tear out your very heart, for as long as it beats within your breast it will afford a clear echo of the scriptural truth. Why then resist such universal evidence? Why not be convinced by these striking contrasts? Why not fall at the feet of Christ broken down by the word of condemnation, that you may rise consoled under the benediction of the word of love? Divine peace and harmony would then succeed to these agonizing conflicts, and you would lose the bitter thought that you have been a prey to a sorrow without object and without result!

Thus, my brethren, we have seen that in the condition of man after the fall, the work of preparation was commenced. But more than this was necessary—there must be first the experience of life, and then the positive revelation of God, without which the meaning of these contrasts would have been lost. We have now to shew you by what circumstances, what revelations and institutions, God developed the desire of salvation in the first ages of humanity. The facts are well known, and I have only to recall them briefly to your recollection.

Even in the first family we see the strife going on between good and evil—between the seed of God and the seed of the serpent. Abel represents the faithful portion of humanity, as Cain the unfaithful portion, by his hardness and his murderous hatred. The first blood which watered the earth wrote on the soil a mournful prophecy—it announced the death of a multitude of just persons, and especially of that Just One whose shed blood speaks better things than that

of Abel. If we trace the destiny of Adam's race up to the deluge, the same fact still appears. The children of God are always opposed to the children of men—to those who walk in the way of rebellion. There was a moment when it seemed as if the power of evil were about to triumph. The sons of God made alliances with the children of men, and from this impious association there resulted such an overflow of iniquity that one faithful family only remained,—that of Noah. It was then that by a terrible punishment—the greatest which has ever overwhelmed the earth—God broke the power of sin. The deluge was, as it were, a second general condemnation of humanity. It was designed to testify everywhere, and in all time, to the sin of man, and to his punishment, while the deliverance of Noah was to inspire confidence in the divine compassion. But the family of the patriarch, like that of Adam, was divided. Sin soon overflowed anew, and with sin punishment. Unfaithful humanity fell into idolatry, and some families only preserved their faith in the true God. For those few believing souls how well adapted were these past events to excite the desire of salvation! That frightful manifestation of evil,—the sight of the immortal creature prostrating himself before wood and stone,—the spectacle of his degradation would render more sad and poignant the conviction of the fall! The traces of the deluge everywhere visible, would forcibly impress the soul with a salutary terror of the justice of God. On the other hand, the multiplied blessings granted to His own children spoke of the goodness of the Lord, and revived the hope of complete forgiveness. And was not its pledge seen in the rainbow with which God had connected His second covenant with humanity?

Then, my brethren, in addition to events, there was the word of God, His positive revelation. The promise of salvation became more precise. It was not now simply the great human family from which the Saviour was to spring. It was the branch of Seth in the family of Adam, the branch of Noah in the family of Seth, the branch of Shem in the family of Noah. But at the same time that hope was strengthened in the heart of man, his sins were condemned in the clearest words. And there is one institution especially, traceable to the earliest ages, since we find it in the family of Adam, which plays an important part in the work of preparation—I mean that of sacrifice. When I call this an institution, I would not say that it was directly founded by God. It is possible that it was so; or it may have been that there was no special revelation on the subject; none is found in the sacred narrative. It would certainly have arisen naturally from the condition of man and the promise of God. The proof of this is in the universality of sacrifice;—a nation without an altar has yet to be discovered. Sacrifice is then the expression of a universal need of the conscience. What does it signify? With what design was it instituted? It is a sensible manifestation of the desire of salvation, and this desire, as is the case with all our emotions, while being expressed, is also excited and developed. Why are sacrifices offered? Is it not in order to obtain reconciliation with God? In this hope the lamb and the bull are slain, the fruits of the ground are presented. Sacrifice is an attempt at reconciliation—an inefficacious attempt, since it is constantly renewed. What means this if not that man confesses himself to be a sinner, and condemned? Would he seek to be reconciled

with God if he did not feel that he had deserved His anger? The confession of his misery rises with the flame of every burnt-offering. This is the first feeling contained in the desire of salvation—the sorrow of condemnation, expressed by sacrifice. But the second feeling, the hope of deliverance, finds equally here its symbols. Would sacrifice be offered by those who believed themselves irreversibly condemned? Would an impossible reconciliation be attempted? One only offers sacrifice to a God in whom one has hope. This is what is spoken by the victims everywhere slain—the first-fruits laid upon a thousand altars—the offerings consumed by fire: “O God! be appeased! be appeased! we have offended Thee. We tremble, and yet we hope, since we come to Thee. When shall the pure victim appear? When shall the sacrifice of a perfect reconciliation be presented?” And as man knew that God took pleasure in these sacrifices, he acquired more and more the assurance of pardon, even amidst the confusion of sin. We may say that from each altar there went up a sigh after the Saviour—a sigh often polluted by the impure incense of idolatry, but yet received by the true God.

The first period of revelation has shewn us, then, the rough draught of the work of preparation. If we pass now to the second, this work will appear farther advanced. The second period comprehends the election of a family, and in this family of a special people of God. Let us first remark that this was not an arbitrary choice, any more than the election of Noah. He feared and built the ark, Abraham believed and obeyed. Faith is always the means by which divine favours are received. Let it not be forgotten that the father of the chosen race was also the father of the faithful. If

we consider this election in itself, we shall understand how well it was adapted to further the vast plans of divine love. God said to Abraham, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred." Such was the condition of the promise made to him in these words:—"In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." The election of a family and of a nation, had not for its object to create a race of privileged persons; we learn this clearly from the words just quoted. This election, like every other, was a ministry, and a ministry which was to exercise itself for the good of all mankind. We must never lose sight of the divine intention in choosing the people of Israel. God wished through them to bless all the families of the earth. There is no exclusiveness in this fact; the mercies of God are not shut up to an election to be imprisoned therein, but rather to be preserved that they may overflow so much the more abundantly upon all. How often has this election of Israel been misconstrued and depreciated! To judge by certain interpretations of prophecy, one would certainly say that humanity only existed for the Jews, rather than the Jews for humanity, forgetting the very words of their election, which so plainly define its object,—in thy seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed; a temporary fact with a special purpose is transformed into a permanent fact. The Church seems but a satellite of Judaism, called to shine in the future only by the light which it lends. That there are blessings reserved for this nation we willingly grant, but that its destiny is to be always as it were the axis of universal religious history, this we deny, in the name even of the election of Abraham. God in this election was working for the salvation of all the families of the earth.

It remains for us to inquire how this special election has contributed to the work of preparation. You will remember, my brethren, in what we have considered this work mainly to consist, *i.e.* in developing the desire of the Saviour. It was necessary that humanity should come to acknowledge its condemnation, and also to cast a look of hope and supplication towards heaven. The election of a special people was designed to produce and to strengthen this twofold feeling. The chosen people, by the very fact of its absolute separation from other nations, proclaimed the unworthiness and corruption of our nature. Its isolation taught that in order to stand in relation to God, it was necessary to be kept apart from the human race, even in a sense to break with it. What could more clearly reveal its misery, and its condemnation? It was then a race profane, lost, accursed, since the first condition of belonging to God was to dissolve one's relation with it, and to avoid in some sort its contact. What a shame, what a reproach for humanity! The very existence of the people of God was an accusing witness of the fall. But, on the other hand, did not the choice of a portion of mankind indicate that all was not lost, that there were resources of grace on which man might count? This imperfect mediation predicted that which should be perfect; chosen men had the right to communicate with God. Every link was not broken between earth and heaven, and the moment might arrive when human nature, pardoned and regenerated, should regain the divine communion of former days. The word of condemnation, and the word of love—Judaism contained both the one and the other.

There is one fact which it is interesting to notice, *viz.* that the election of the people of God fundamen-

tally corresponds to a necessity of conscience universally manifested. We have seen that altars and sacrifices existed everywhere. We may add that everywhere, also, before Christ, priests were found. Now the sentiments which gave rise to the priesthood, are precisely those which God designed to develop by the election of the people of Israel. The priesthood is Judaism in miniature, as Judaism is the priesthood on a larger scale. What, in fact, is expressed by the choice of particular men to present to God the incense of sacrifice, if not the conviction that the rest of mankind, that is to say the mass, the generality are not worthy to approach Him, consequently that humanity is fallen. The priest is an exceptional man; man, then, regarded as man, is too corrupt to enter into direct communication with the Divinity. The priesthood is a confession of the fall made by man, while the election of a peculiar people proclaims it in the name of God. The priesthood had also its prophetic side; did it not speak of a possibility of man's finding his God again? Would he have attempted a mediation if he had had no glimpse of pardon? The priests were like the first fruits of humanity, reserved in the sanctuary against the day when it should enter there as a whole through Jesus Christ. Thus God, by the election of His people, sanctioned a fact which was universal as conscience. He accepted this fact, or rather He Himself first produced it by the disposition which He inspired in the heart of man, and He took it under His immediate direction, that by cultivation He might cause it to bring forth salutary fruits. Let us no longer, then, be scandalized at this election, as if it had interrupted the development of humanity. Before it was revealed from heaven, it was partially realized by the priesthood.

Israel is a priest nation. As no one accuses the ancient priests of having been opposed to the general interest, but sees in them, on the contrary, a valuable institution for each nation, so should we recognize in the priesthood of Israel a salutary institution for all mankind.

Moreover, brethren, to whom was it owing that one particular nation was chosen? Must it not be attributed to other nations, and their frightful state of corruption? Have we not seen them so deeply degraded that they bowed before the material objects they had deified? Idolatry was one of the essential causes of the election of Israel. The worship of false gods spread with fearful rapidity. It speedily attained its lowest depths of infamy. Without doubt God did not wish to abandon these idolatrous nations, and we shall point out even in their history the traces of a general work of preparation; but it was not the less necessary that a barrier should be set up against the impure torrent of paganism. It was necessary that the true faith should reserve some place for itself, and that there should be a nation placed under God's direction to receive His revelation, and to guard the depot of the promises till the day of their realization. Israel, to employ the figure of the prophets, was like an enclosure, planted by the divine hand, and secured by a close hedge from the attacks of wild beasts, which well represent the gross and impure religions of the old world. If it was thus protected; if God even built a tower and a wall to guard it, it was because there the divine germ was being cultivated, which was to produce the salvation of humanity. We shall see in our next discourse how this germ reached its maturity, and

how the desire of the Saviour gradually attained to its greatest intensity.

The election of the people of God had then for its object the good of all the families of the earth ; such is the thought which springs from the last part of this discourse. May it remain graven on your hearts ! It not only justifies the love of God, but also teaches us to look upon our privileges in a christian spirit. Our privileges, like those of the Jews, are a ministry of love for poor sinners ; they invest us with a mission of charity ; the more numerous they are the grander is our mission. We mistake their nature when we regard them as designed for our own profit ; we are not the reservoir but the channel of God's grace. Woe to us if we seek to arrest its course ! Woe to us if we transform into selfish enjoyment the happiness of Christians ! There have been those who, not contented with taking in an exclusive sense the election of the people of Israel, have spoken in a no less narrow way of the existing privileges of the people of God. To listen to them one would imagine that their best consolation consisted in their small number :—a little nation, a little flock—such are their favourite expressions. They resign themselves with deplorable facility to the idea that humanity, as a whole, should be lost ; they feel no interest in its destiny ; they only see in history a vast display of the infernal power, a bringing about of condemnation. As to them they find in the view of those terrible approaching judgments, which shall in no way personally concern themselves, an undisguised satisfaction. This tendency to exclusiveness, which has always been for the most part foreign to Christians, belongs, if you like, to Judaism—but to Judaism such as it shewed itself in the days of Saint Paul, proud and narrow,

openly attached to its privileges as to a monopoly. It is not primitive Judaism—Judaism after God, by which all the families of the earth were to be blessed ; it is least of all Christianity. Let us put far away from us this narrowness which libels the love of God ! Let us acknowledge indeed, that many are called but few chosen—few responding to the call ; but let us acknowledge it with tears. Let us have a tender sympathy for humanity. Humanity ! I love that word. It corresponds to the greatness of the divine compassion. It was for humanity that Christ died ; His blood was shed for all. “ Our Saviour,” says Saint Paul, “ will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.”¹ Let every gift that we have received, pass from our own heart into others. Let us receive in order to give. To give is to receive still, for the more faith communicates itself the more is it nourished. Everything around us protests against the narrowing of divine love. We have shewn you that the outer world, the ordinary facts of our life, the contrasts which strike us in every soul, and especially the great universal voice of conscience, convey to every human creature a call to conversion. Let us not, then, treat any as strangers. Let us say that the Spirit of God breathes upon all, and that the work of preparation is rough-hewn in each one. Let us bring the gospel to our brethren, as it has been brought to us, with love, with sympathy. Let us shew them, that this Christ, whom we possess, is in reality the desired of their hearts ; let our peaceful and joyous faith prove better than our words, that there is a sovereign satisfaction to be found in Jesus of Nazareth for the deepest aspirations of the heart and conscience. Then,

¹ 1 Tim. ii. 4.

brethren, shall we realize the will of God manifested by our election, and so admirably expressed in the words spoken to Abraham:—"I will bless thee, and thou shalt be a blessing." Blessed by the Eternal may we all become blessings to the families of the earth, and lovingly labour in the work of redeeming love!

III.

THE PREPARATION FOR THE COMING OF JESUS CHRIST.

Discourse III.

JUDAISM.

“Salvation is of the Jews.”—JOHN iv. 22.

WE proved to you in our last discourse that the election of a peculiar people of God, contributed to the accomplishing of the first promise contained in these words:—“The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent’s head.” We have now to shew you, in the history and the institutions of the chosen nation, the development of the work of preparation. Our text positively declares that salvation is of the Jews. The circumstances under which these words were spoken indicate their importance. The Saviour was conversing with a Samaritan woman, and she had put to Him the grand question for herself and for her people:—Which are right, the Jews or the Samaritans, in their respective pretensions of having the true worship approved of God? Is it on this mountain or at Jerusalem that men ought to worship? The Lord now proclaims aloud that the approved worship is that celebrated at Jerusalem. He announces, indeed, the coming of the

blessed time, when all local and national worship shall be superseded by the worship in spirit and in truth; but as concerning the past He gives His verdict fully for the Jews. "Salvation," he says, "is of the Jews." That which He asserts of the Samaritan worship, He would have asserted equally of any other outside of Judaism. Thus the mission of the chosen people appears before us in all its grandeur. It was essentially temporary, as is proved by this prediction of worship in spirit and in truth; but it was a magnificent mission. We, who do not admit that other nations were absolutely abandoned by God, but recognize His hand in their history, are not the less convinced that the work of preparation was directly accomplished only in Judaism. We say with Saint Paul: "What advantage hath the Jew? Much every way: chiefly because that unto him were committed the oracles of God."¹

These oracles have sounded from Jewish lips; the prophets and the saints have belonged to the chosen nation. God has spoken through it, and it has been permitted to speak to God in the name of penitent humanity, and to call for the coming of the Saviour. The voice of heaven promising salvation, and the voice of earth praying for pardon, have met on its sacred soil. In its seed humanity and divinity were united; in one of its towns it was said, "Unto us is born a Saviour." The patriarchs, the believers, the kings, the men of God in all times, have been the ancestors of Christ in a moral as well as in a natural sense. It is this which gives its beauty to that genealogy of the Saviour which the Gospels give us with so much care. You have perhaps only seen in it a dry enumeration; but to those who read it with a

¹ Rom. iii. 1, 2.

profound insight into the history of God's people, each of these names appears a bright link in the long chain of revelations that were to end in Jesus Christ. No; we will not diminish thy glory, people of Abraham, of Moses, of David, and of Isaiah! If we cannot entertain for thee chimerical hopes, that lower and materialise thy true mission, we declare aloud, that no other nation has had a vocation such as thine. Cast down, despised, like all the elect of God, thou didst bear in the old world the reproach of Christ. Other nations may have¹ shone more brilliantly in history. Thou hadst not the artistic prestige nor the science of Greece, which remains the great enchantress of our minds. But it was better to be an earthen vessel in which, to use the apostle's words, the treasure of the knowledge of God was deposited, than a vessel of gold in which error and corruption should be contained. To all the contempt of the learned, ancient or modern, thou mayest reply in the words of Christ to the woman of Sychar: Salvation is of the Jews. Let us develop, my brethren, this important truth; and may I, by the considerations which I shall present to you, render the study of the Old Testament more useful and more edifying! You have undoubtedly experienced sweet and solemn impressions in reading its most striking facts and its most touching pages. You have imbibed that grand and divine poetry which is lavishly scattered therein. But we should be edified, not by the details alone, but by the book regarded as a whole. The relation of each portion of the Old Testament to the one final end of the economy being perceived, light will be reflected on many obscure points, and that which had been previously read in a fragmentary manner

will now assume a new interest. I shall suppose the history of the Jewish people to be known by you in its principal features, and shall merely now remind you of them, devoting myself entirely to giving you a guiding thread for the multiplicity of facts and of divine oracles.

We know what was comprised in the work of preparation. It tended to develop the desire of the Saviour. It led man to weep over his condemnation, and to look for the promised Comforter. It had no other object than the developing of those two feelings which produce the desire of salvation—the sorrow, the conscious bitterness of sin, and the hope of forgiveness. We need not repeat what we have said of the election of the people of God. It is in their history that we have now to show you the progress of the conviction of sin and of the assurance of reconciliation. We distinguish four periods in Judaism. The first is the patriarchal period. The second is the period of formation, of constitution, extending from Moses to the kingship of David. The third is the period of full development, rapid and transitory, like every phase of prosperity on earth; it reaches from the kingship of David to the fall of Solomon. The fourth is the period of decline, at first little observable, and broken by gleams of the ancient glory; this period extends from the schism of the ten tribes to the subjection of the Jews by the Romans, which was the completion of their temporal ruin. We shall have to inquire of each of these epochs what God has said to humanity by His revelation, and what the chosen people have replied; for it is not enough to know how much of the divine seed God sowed in each period; we must also learn how and in what measure it was received.

We shall show you the desire of salvation kindled ever more brightly in the hearts of the true Israelites from time to time, until it burn with its full blaze even over the ruins of the terrestrial glory of Israel, and until the birth of Christ shall give its supreme realization to our text: Salvation is of the Jews.

Let us now consider Judaism such as it was, while wholly restricted to the family of the patriarchs. Everything in their life tells of the condemnation of man, and of the love of God. The most trifling incidents have a remote bearing on the great future. Each event brings a double message from God: at first it might seem to speak only of the present; but a second meaning soon comes forth concerning future times. It appears like a divine messenger, who before taking his leave points onwards by some sign the eye and the thought of man. Let us contemplate with this view the trials and the blessings common to all the patriarchs. They were strangers and pilgrims on the earth, possessing only the room necessary for their burial in the cave of Machpelah. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, though owning great riches, ceased not to dwell in tents. There was here something more than the simple fact of the nomadic life of shepherds of old; there was an express direction from God. The patriarchs traversed countries where flourishing towns had been built, and they would have liked, no doubt, to make for themselves a place of repose. But they were forbidden to settle in any country, however fertile and attractive it might be. It was a real trial to be thus strangers everywhere—travellers without rest. But what condition could have been more favourable for promoting the feeling, that since the fall this earth is only a vast place of banishment?

Nothing could have been better adapted to convince the patriarchs of this fact, than to lead in reality, and in the very land of their birth, the life of an exile. Every place was for them a strange country, even the best known and loved, except the narrow spot where their fathers rested and where they themselves were to be laid. Their wandering life was like a striking and ever fresh revelation, written not in dead letters but in symbolic facts, of the condition of fallen man. Thus their tents served St. Paul for a type by which to describe our destiny here below: "We that are in this tabernacle," said he, "do groan." How should we not groan if in a tabernacle! How not sigh with regret, and with desire after a more stable life! Certainly the patriarchs did groan; far from growing acclimatized or slumbering in their present condition, they sighed, as we read in the Epistle to the Hebrews, after a better country. They were men of desire—men of the future. And of this better country God had given them the promise; for he said to Abraham, speaking of the land of Canaan, "I will give unto thee the land wherein thou art a stranger."¹ This promise was renewed to all the patriarchs. Undoubtedly it was to have an earthly accomplishment, and had it in fact, but this was secondary. To regard it as other than a symbol, to imagine that the eternal possession of the land of Canaan has been secured to the Jews, is to deny all progress in the mode of divine revelation—to remain indefinitely on its lowest step, on that which is nearest the earth. What interest is there, religiously speaking, in the fact that a family or a nation should have in prospect a fine temporal inheritance? We grant that this promise, like all

¹ Gen. xvii. 8.

others, had an outer covering that was material, but beneath this lay concealed the immortal hope of salvation. The thick veil was designed to render it palpable to the child-man. The veil in itself is of no value, but only what it conceals. This land of Canaan represented to the patriarchs all that was good, all that was beautiful in the future. It was the land of rest and of joy—it was for them the accomplishment of their aspirations after a better order of things here below. In fact, it was in their eyes the kingdom of God re-established—salvation realized. And thus, strangers and pilgrims as they were, they had but one object before them, and this they regarded unceasingly—they strove after it with all their strength. They were indeed men of desire.

There was another trial and another blessing which marked the life of the early patriarchs; the trial was the long waiting for descendants, and the blessing was their birth. God had not only promised the possession of Canaan to themselves, but he had said to each of them, “I will give this land unto thee, and to thy seed.” Those who understand the promise of Canaan, in a temporal rather than in a spiritual sense, and are still looking for its full accomplishment, must regard in the same manner the promise concerning the posterity of Abraham. They must admit equally that the important matter here was the multitude of his descendants, who became indeed more numerous than the sand of the sea. No Christian interpreter will consent to this view, especially after Saint Paul has, in his epistle to the Galatians, distinguished the spiritual substance of this prophecy from its temporal form. The symbolism admitted in the latter case ought to be seen in the former also.

The promise of a blessed posterity made to Abraham, stands in close connection with the promise of the garden of Eden. The first of all the prophecies spoke of the triumph of divine love over the power of darkness through the seed of the woman. Every prediction bearing on this seed of the woman, necessarily implied the birth of a Saviour. Thus the patriarchs could not but see in the posterity which was promised them, and which was to be called to conquer the land of Canaan, a realization of the promise of salvation. I know well that at first they looked for an immediate accomplishment of the words of God. They expected that their posterity should be enriched with worldly blessings, but I doubt not that their hope, almost unconsciously to themselves, outgrew this temporal interpretation of the promise. As the land of Canaan represented salvation to their eyes in its general outline, so the posterity that was to establish itself therein represented to them the Saviour, the deliverer. The temporal blessing enclosed the spiritual, the eternal one. The hope of salvation became more firm. On the other hand the trial which preceded the blessing, developed efficaciously the feeling of human misery, not only because it was sorrow, but also by the peculiar nature of the sorrow. You know, my brethren, how the fulfilment of the promise of posterity was delayed in the case of the first patriarchs. Abraham, especially, who, with his wife, had reached old age, had to hope against hope. Isaac was born in opposition to the laws of nature, he was the child of miracle. Was there not in this delay a grand symbol of the divine seed of the woman? Was there not an indication that this blessed descendant would be not the fruit of human strength but of the grace of God? Isaac was visibly a free and miraculous

gift. When his father held him in his feeble arms, he must have said to himself, This heir of all the promises, this precious child for whom so high a destiny is reserved, he is the son of my old age. He is a monument of the power of God, to whom be all honour and glory! Thus humility would combine with the joyous hope of salvation, and the desire of the Christ, though vague, would still rise purified to heaven. The rite of circumcision, instituted by God for the posterity of Abraham, was the seal of his election. It set forth on the one hand moral circumcision, the mortification of the heart and will rendered necessary by the principle of rebellion which sin had brought with it; on the other hand it represented the favour of God to the chosen race.

If, now, from the facts common to the life of all the patriarchs, we pass to those which were peculiar to each one, we shall recognize the same object pursued by God in relation to them all. I shall only mention the most remarkable events. The faith of Abraham passed through a fearful trial. He was commanded by the Lord to sacrifice his son, that Isaac on whose head rested all his hopes. No words can describe the conflict which must have rent his heart between the feelings of the father and those of the saint. It was the greatest sorrow of his life, but its richest blessing also; for deliverance as complete as it was unexpected arrived at length from heaven. The altar of Moriah was a monument of the divine compassion up to the day when, illumined with a new light through prophecy, and above all through the cross of Jesus, it became the type of the most inscrutable mystery of the love of the Father, who gave up His only Son for a redeeming sacrifice. The life of Isaac contains nothing

that is striking; it seems like a partially effaced reflection of that of his father. But Jacob's history is full of the most touching interest. That which we noticed in the earliest human families reappears in the chosen one. The seed of the serpent is here also developed by the side of the seed divine. Ishmael represents in the family of Abraham this miserable portion of humanity. Esau continues the evil line in the family of Isaac. Esau is the gross man, given up to the time present; the man of the world, the materialist who sacrifices for his flesh the glorious heritage of the promises; Jacob is the man of desire and of the future. His greatest trials were caused by his brother, but were partially merited by the guilty deceit which mingled with his faith. He was compelled to fly in sadness from the paternal roof, twice exiled in the world, first as belonging to the pilgrim family of the patriarchs, and then as forced to leave his old father and his mother Rebecca. Affliction follows him to the house of Laban, where he is reduced to virtual slavery; it attends him in his anxious flight, and in his meeting with his brother; it inflicts on him its heaviest strokes, when he buries the wife of his choice, and when he mourns his favourite son as dead. But amid his trials how abundant are his consolations. There is first the vision of Bethel, the shining ladder representing the communication re-established between earth and heaven; then the protection afforded him in the different dangers that he encounters; his numerous posterity; his beloved son found again on the steps of Egypt's throne. One fact in his life seems to sum up its sorrows and its blessings, and to reveal the link between them; we mean his mysterious conflict with the Eternal. He wrestled with tears and supplications, according to the prophet Hosea. The hand

of his powerful adversary inflicted on him a severe wound, which became the sign of his victory, for he received immediately afterwards the name of Israel, which means a prince with God. Thus, then, God sent him so many trials only to bring him to that contrition which is all powerful with Him, who has said that He is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart. God only wounds us that we may overcome with Him. Man may be Israel, a prince of God; but this not by his strength but by his weakness, by the destruction of his pride. The conflict and the victory of Jacob are a grand symbol of our relation with God. The wound of the patriarch reminded him to what a sinful race he belonged, while his name assured him of the mercy of God, who will be conquered by our sighs. This is why the same patriarch, who said to Pharaoh, "Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been," could, on his death-bed, breathe out his soul in a glorious song, depicting the high destinies of his race. Trials and blessings had rendered his desire of salvation more positive, and never came the breath of prophecy from more prepared lips.

Such, then, was the patriarchal epoch. Revelation appears in it under a fresh and childlike form, which gives it an incomparable charm. The truth is rendered visible and palpable by striking facts. The revelation is in the life of the patriarchs like an acted parable. But the divine seed has been sown in good ground—it has been received by humble and believing souls. The mission of the patriarchs was accomplished. They had appropriated the portion of revelation that was granted them. Humanity in their persons had developed the germ of salvation deposited within it by the Spirit of God. The desire of the Saviour was more

lively at the end of this period, than it had been at its commencement. In the following one we shall find it marked by a still increasing growth.

This second period is that of Mosaism. Let us first speak of its facts, and then touch upon its institutions. The events of the history of God's people divide themselves equally into two classes—trials and blessings. There is ever on the one side the rod of God smiting the sinner, to convince him more and more of his condemnation, and, on the other, the helping hand of the gracious and holy Father raising, consoling, restoring to hope, the afflicted heart. The first trial of Abraham's descendants after they had become a great nation was the captivity in Egypt. This remained in the memory of the people as the very type of misfortune. Egypt was for them a country of sorrow and of opprobrium. The whip of the taskmaster fell heavily and without reprieve on the poor captives, all the more pitiable as knowing themselves called to a nobler destiny. And yet the very excess of their affliction was to lead them towards this destiny; for without the frightful persecutions, the crushing labour, the murderous sword of Egypt, the twelve tribes would have soon blended with the dominant race. The children of Abraham would no longer have been strangers and pilgrims. The cruel treatment which they experienced raised an insurmountable barrier between them and the race of their oppressors. And this suffering of a whole nation beaten, mutilated, down-trodden, repeated as it was in every family, fell with all its weight upon each individual to subdue and humble him before God.

The exodus from Egypt was itself attended with many trying circumstances. How long it was expected!

What delays! What miserable complications! How often did it not seem that all was lost, and that the chains of slavery had but been riveted the more securely by a useless attempt at escape? What a mysterious trial was that period of forty years passed in the burning desert! To imagine its sufferings it is enough to remember that the chosen people more than once in the desert regretted Egypt. The descendants of Abraham were not merely strangers like their ancestors, from the fact that they possessed not an inch of ground in this world; they were absolutely away from all the nations, lost in an immense solitude, turning round, as it were, in a fatal circle, from which they could not escape, within a few days' march of the land flowing with milk and honey, but separated from it by the impassable distance formed by a prohibition from God. Every murmur was chastized, each rebellion put down. The generation that had quitted Egypt left its dust almost entirely to the sand of the desert. Certainly the God of justice was speaking with fearful severity to the proud heart of man in this long solitary dialogue between Himself and Israel!

But, at the same time, when was His goodness more astounding than then? When was it manifested by greater prodigies? Shall I speak of the deliverer miraculously saved from the waters to be raised up at the right moment for the help of the oppressed nation? He was prepared for his work, as are all God's instruments, in solitude, humiliation, and suffering. The mission is not given to Moses at the court of Egypt—there he is yet too proud—but to the Moses of the desert, the lowly shepherd trembling at the voice of Jehovah. Shall I speak of Egypt ten times plagued and terrified, before it broke the bonds of Israel,—of

the waters driven back and heaped into a liquid wall to let the fugitives pass on dry land, while they rolled their avenging waves over Pharaoh and his army,—of the rock changed into a refreshing spring,—of bread from heaven falling periodically to nourish a too often unbelieving people,—of the cloud, the visible sign of the divine presence? You would be weary of listening to the enumeration of these constant miracles before we had exhausted the proofs of God's paternal goodness to Israel.

But it is especially in the conquest of Canaan that both love and justice are displayed. You know, my brethren, how rapid was this conquest! Human means were little used, it was the arm of the Eternal that struck down the walls of Jericho and opened the promised land to the chosen people. I know that their entrance was attended by terrible and mysterious circumstances, at which some have taken offence. The extermination of the Canaanitish nations chills us with horror, even at the distance of so many centuries. But we must not forget into what depths of wickedness these evil nations had fallen. Israel was, as it were, the sword of divine justice. This extermination was a grand national punishment, and since we do not question the right of God to inflict such punishments, we must regard the destruction of these idolatrous nations as we regard the deluge. God made use of the sword of Israel as formerly of the overflowing torrents and the waters of heaven. Besides, it was necessary that under the ancient covenant His justice should alarm mankind. The terrible Jehovah alone could humble them in the dust and make them sigh for pardon. This was an indispensable part of the work of preparation. Do you comprehend, my brethren, the mingled

impression that was produced on the hearts of the chosen people by the manifestation of the wrath of the Most High, of which they were the instruments, and by the continual revelation of His love in that beautiful land which was its most precious bestowment? This mingled impression, was it not precisely a desire for the Redeemer, for the divine Joshua of the future, an aspiration after the full possession of that salvation of which Canaan was the magnificent symbol?

The design of God presents itself to us still more clearly in the institutions given by Moses in His name to the chosen people. They were admirably contrived for awakening and increasing that holy desire which was the soul of the ancient covenant. They enveloped the life of the Jew as with a close net-work, which surrounded him everywhere, in the sanctuary as in his home, on common days and on solemn festivals. You have no doubt been astonished at the minute details into which the inspired legislator of Israel entered. They have appeared to you unworthy of God. But it would argue a very slight knowledge of human nature to trust entirely to great institutions to rule and penetrate it. It would be to forget the infinite resources of our frivolity. In order that a truth may act efficiently on us, it must mingle in our entire life, we must be reminded of it by everything—it must be like the sea which undermines the rock by the constant action of its thousand little waves. Details matter more than generalities, however grand these may be. What are these minutiae after all but the adaptation to each moment, to every circumstance of life, of the sublime truth which is at the foundation of the institutions given by God? This truth in its generality is like an ingot, useless till coined into little

pieces of money. Let us bless God, then, for the minute care with which He regulated everything in the life and worship of His people. We do not wish to justify the exaggeration of those who are always seeking for types, and pretend to read the Gospel in the vestments of the high priest, in the smallest details of the ark, and the most trifling directions of the ceremonial law. This is to transform the interpretation of Scripture into a puerile sport, a kind of guessing of enigmas, which amuses the mind while withering the heart. We only seek in Mosaism the grand features of the work of preparation, the great outlines of prophecy. These we discover everywhere, but nothing more. We must beware that under pretext of taking off the veil from Moses, we do not put on one still more obscuring. Of what use, besides, is the multiplying and refining of types? Assuredly the Jews did not understand them; they were not designed for their benefit. As to ourselves, we have what is better than figures; we have the realities of the Gospel. This mania for types has greatly injured the preaching of the fulness of Christ. It has exhausted the forces of great minds in barren subtleties. In our own day it has spoiled more than one work adapted for edification. Instead of allowing the sweetness of that word which the Psalmist compares to delicious honey to flow into the soul, we are called on to number the colours in each ray of light, and to discuss their combination.

Having made these few remarks, let us now consider the institutions given by God to the chosen people. If we look at them closely, we shall recognize in all the same thought that has struck us in the fact of the election of a nation.

These institutions may be characterized by several general features. The chosen people constituted a theocracy, that is to say, they were under the immediate direction and government of God. In the laws which He gave them we find constantly the same principle; a distinction between the profane and the sacred. The chosen nation was separated from all others as a holy people; within this nation the tribe of Levi was distinguished from the other tribes. The life of the people was divided into days of rest and days of labour. A holy place was set apart in the land wherein they dwelt. The animals were formed into two classes—the pure and the impure. In the same way as Israel was set apart by God, so in Israel the priests were distinguished: in the ordinary life the Sabbath and the festivals were divided from other days; in the land of Judea the sanctuary at Jerusalem was the only consecrated place; and certain animals alone were regarded as clean. Nothing better characterizes Judaism than this setting apart. It is found in it as a whole, and in its details it appears again and again in one sphere after another, and in a series of concentric circles. From the national life it passes into that of the individual. We must endeavour to explain this remarkable fact in its relation to the work of preparation.

We have already, indeed, given the solution when speaking of the election of the people of God, for the thought that presided over this election lives again in each of the institutions of Israel; and we have shewn how it contributed to develop the desire of salvation. It proclaimed, on the one hand, the fall—the perdition of human nature. Humanity was shewn

to be lost indeed, since it was necessary to be separated from it by God before entering into relation with Himself. On the other hand, the possibility of a return to favour was declared, since God deigned to accept a human mediation, imperfect but prophetic. No man can approach the holy God except by special grace, to which no claim can be presented, and what renders the fact certain is that this grace has an exceptional character. This exceptional character is very important. The exception confirms the rule, *i.e.*, the general ruin of humanity, at the same time that it announces recovery by shewing it to be possible. We discover, then, the same character in the divers institutions of Mosaism. It was not enough that the chosen people should be as a whole separated from other nations. The human heart is so fertile in illusions that they would soon have forgotten the profound reason of this separation—this exception. They would have forgotten the corruption of human nature. Thus the separation was made to re-appear within themselves. Hence the choice of a sacerdotal tribe; hence the priesthood which, to employ a figure borrowed from the sciences, is Judaism at the second power. The priesthood fulfils the same mission to the nation which the nation fulfils to humanity; it recalls the misery, the unworthiness of man, and also the goodness of God, who prepares for him a means of reconciliation with Himself. Even this is not enough, human nature is not only in a general sense corrupt, but also in its various manifestations. The life of man is an impure life. He must be made to feel that he has become incapable of approaching God,—that the habitual course of his life flows at a distance from Him, and that an extraordinary grace is necessary before he can

present himself before God. Hence the distinction between holy and common days. The Sabbath, the festival, the sacred day tells of the habitual corruption of human life, and of the condescension of God, who deigns to furnish man with an opportunity of shaking off that corruption for a time. Even this is not enough; man must feel that the ground which he treads is accursed, that acceptable worship cannot be offered on every part of it. Hence the distinction between sacred places and those which are not so. Hence the building of a sanctuary that should be a monument at once of the fall and of forgiveness—of the fall in that it was required, of forgiveness in that God approved it. Again, man must feel that the curse which has overtaken the earth has affected all that it contains. Hence the distinction between animals clean and unclean, and all those laws of purification which proclaimed at once the universality of the stain, and the possibility of its removal. Thus, brethren, this double word of condemnation and of love which we have heard in the outer and in the inner world, and which is echoed by the prayer of man calling for his Saviour, sounds not less clearly from all the different institutions of Mosaism. They repeat it from one to the other: “Thou hast sinned,” say they in one voice to man; “thy race is condemned. This is why there is a priest-nation: this is why there are priests within that nation. Thy life is corrupted at its source; this is why there must be exceptional days for thy worship. The earth itself is included in the condemnation: this is why thou needest a sanctuary. All that surrounds thee is infected by the principle of evil: this is why thou requirest constant purifications.” The priest-

hood, the Sabbath, the tabernacle, the ceremonial laws, there is not one of these institutions that does not tend to develop the conviction of sin and the hope of reconciliation, in other words, the desire of salvation.

I have not mentioned one institution which occupies a most important place in Mosaism, because I have already referred to it and described its character when treating of the first family of mankind—I mean sacrifice. You know how great a part it played in the life of every Israelite. Moses gave the most minute directions for the numerous occasions of offering victims to the Lord. Sacrifice was for sin, because of sin ; it revealed its enormity and announced reparation. In every lamb that was slain man confessed his guilt, and God promised pardon. I need not insist upon a truth so evident.

But there are two great facts in Judaism to which we ought to call your attention, because they afford a striking justification of our views. These two facts are as it were the pillars of the ancient economy ; I refer to the law and to prophecy. Each of these answers to one of the feelings that constitute the desire of salvation,—the law to the conviction of condemnation, and prophecy to the hope of pardon. We have on our side the most decisive interpretation, that of the Apostle Paul. The Law of Sinai was, according to him, a schoolmaster to bring men to Christ, that is to say, a severe governor preparing them for the rule of the gentle Master. How does it do this ? By rendering sin *exceeding sinful*, says the same apostle, that is, by compelling it to manifest itself clearly in the full light of day. Sin loves the darkness, it loves to spread through all our feelings like a subtle, intangible

poison, it dreads the light like the serpent by which it is personified, it crawls on the ground esteeming itself the more secure as it is better hidden. Well, the law of God tears away its deceitful veil. It can no longer dissimulate, for the law reveals true holiness to man. It sets him in the presence of God. It casts a pitiless light on his heart, forcing him to acknowledge its corruption. It places before his eyes the pure mirror of the divine perfections, and he is compelled with horror to perceive and to curse his own impurity. Thus does sin become exceeding sinful. This is not all. The law awakens in man the desire to realize that moral ideal which his conscience approves. But the commandment of the ancient law brings light without heat. Man necessarily fails in his attempts, and there remains to him nothing but the persuasion of his incurable weakness. The law is ever the daughter of Sinai, the mount of divine anger. It was promulgated amidst lightnings before a people struck down with terror, and it sounds unceasingly over the head of man like a thunderbolt ready to burst, the awful threatening, *Do this or thou shalt die*. Thus has it a triple mission, to reveal the holiness of God, and by contrast the corruption of man, to bring his weakness to the proof, and to terrify him with the thought of the divine wrath. It presents to him the justice of God apart from His love, not only in the domain of religious but also of civil life. The law of retaliation, "*An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth,*" realized first in the relations of man with God passes into his different social connections. The law of Sinai, to employ a Scriptural figure, bears in its hand the sword of the Eternal, and transfixes man with it first in one part and then in another, to tear him from

the dreams of pride, and to make him fall down crushed and annihilated at the feet of his Lord, crying out, I am but a poor sinner—have pity!

And already God had pity. Prophecy saved man from sinking in despair. Like the angel that collects our sighs and our prayers it received the tears and the groans which the law drew forth from man, and changed them into prayers. The law cast him down in the dust wounded and bleeding. Prophecy raised him up and poured into his wounds the oil and wine of celestial love. It told him of deliverance, painting for him beforehand, in mystic pictures, the triumphs of the power of mercy. We shall form but an incomplete idea of prophecy if we discover it only in the oracles of the prophets. It circulates through Judaism, it appears in every institution, and in every event. Mosaism, as a whole, was a figure of that which was to come. Thus, even had the prophets not existed, the voice of prophecy would have been heard without ceasing. It spoke even in silence, by the worship, the altar, the blood of the victims that were offered.

Let us not divide the law from prophecy, but dwell upon their double ministry simultaneously exercised. The law said to man, God is a jealous God. Woe! woe to the wicked! His indignation is like the great waters. Rebels and sinners shall be punished together, and those who have forsaken the Eternal shall be consumed. Ah! I will be satisfied, hath He said, in the punishment of my adversaries—I will be avenged on mine enemies. Prophecy immediately took up the word, and said, Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow. The law cried, Desolation! desolation! Prophecy overpowered its voice with the words, The desert shall blossom as the

rose. Take courage—behold your God! The eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Thus the law and prophecy marched side by side, the one thundering and terrifying, the other consoling and strengthening! Man between the two, at once humbled and encouraged, advanced along a devastated path towards a brilliant end, projecting himself onwards with his whole soul from a present that was overshadowed by the law towards a future that was illumined by prophecy.

The law and prophecy rendered the Mosaic institutions complete. We have already seen how transitory they were. The law in its Jewish form was to be abolished at the very time that it was fulfilled,—Old Testament prophecy was to retire before the coming of the Saviour, as a figure before the reality. The distinction between the sacred and the profane was also to fade away when the redemption should have been accomplished, and man be replaced in his primitive condition. Priests, Sabbath, sanctuary, the distinction among animals, all these institutions, linked together by the same thought, were destined to disappear like Judaism itself with which they were indissolubly bound up. To transport them into Christianity is to deny the difference between the preparation and the realization of salvation. Happy would it have been for us if certain grievously mistaken persons had not incited some pious Christians carefully to collect the relics of the old covenant and introduce them into the spiritual temple, not adding thereby either to its beauty or its solidity. Let us leave the Mosaic institutions to their true destination, which is indeed sufficiently glorious.

If you desire to have not an abstract idea but a

kind of intuition of the influence which these institutions were calculated to exert, follow me into the holy city at the time when Mosaism had attained its full development. Let us imagine the life of a pious Israelite at this period. He knows that he belongs to an elect people, and that he is surrounded by idolatrous nations, with whom he must avoid all contact. "Take heed to thyself," God has said, "lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land whither thou goest." He remembers how these nations were exterminated in the days of his fathers, and he reminds himself with trembling that his God is a holy God who hates evil. He recognizes his absolute dependence on this jealous God by the gifts and offerings which he lays on His altar. His misery and unworthiness are recalled to him by the sight of that descendant of Aaron who presides alone over the worship. He cannot sit down at his own table even for a festival of rejoicing, but the idea of the universal corruption recurs to his mind from the care which he must take not to touch the flesh of any unclean animal. If he walk in the streets of his city he is compelled to avoid all profane contact. The feast days are full of the same teaching. The Sabbath, the new moon, the seventh month, the seventh year, recall to him that time of innocence when the whole of life was devoted to the peaceful service of God, as alas ! it is not now, since it has become necessary to set apart special times for worship. The passover revives his recollection of the deliverance from Egypt. The mystic lamb leads him to anticipate another redemption a thousandfold greater. Pentecost carries him back to the day when the law was spoken. Sinai rises again before him, and he smites upon his breast. The feast of tabernacles

reminds him of the sojourn in the desert, when Israel like his ancestors lived in tents. Blessings as well as chastisements live again in his memory. But who can fully describe what he experiences when he witnesses the offering that is made morning and evening for the people,—above all, when he himself presents a sacrifice for his sins! He lays his hands on the lamb or the bull that he may make it his representative. Before its immolation he was sinking under the burden of his sin; his heart is relieved now that the blood has flowed. Can you think that this arises merely from the death of the victim? Is there not a divine voice, a voice of prophecy, and an inward voice also, which enables him to read in the shed blood a promise of complete atonement! He returns to his house with more of hope, but also with a more ardent desire for forgiveness, and a more fervent aspiration after the Lamb of God, who shall take away the sins of the world. There was one day in the year which was in a special sense devoted to sacrifice. This was the day of atonement. Conceive for yourself that solemn scene, and the impression which it would make upon every pious Israelite. The high priest begins by offering a sacrifice for himself and his family. Then he kills a he-goat for the sins of the people, and purifies the whole sanctuary by the sprinkling of its blood. What, then! would the believing Jew exclaim, has that which is most pure, most holy on all the earth need of purification in the eyes of God! O race condemned, race impure, humble thyself in the dust! The high priest remained during this sacrifice alone in the sanctuary, and not only did he touch the horns of the altar with the blood, but he even entered within the veil into the holy of holies. What a moment was that!

This veil, only lifted on that day and for that man, when will it be raised for me? When shall I be satisfied with the glory of Thy likeness, O my God? What pious heart but must have burned in that solemn hour to enter within the veil! But all is not over. The high priest has taken the goat and laid on it, by the imposition of his hands, the sins of all the people, and now he sends it away to the desert, as if to declare that iniquity should be one day altogether borne away from the condemned race. Oh! when will dawn that day of real forgiveness? When shall we re-enter our dwellings freed from this dreadful and overwhelming burden of our sins? O Thou who art to come, divine seed of the woman, Messiah, Deliverer, Saviour, come quickly! Thus there went up from the sanctuary at the time of the solemn feasts, as day by day from the home of the humblest child of Israel, that sigh for the Saviour which it was the mission of all these Mosaic institutions to inspire.

We have dwelt thus long on Mosaism, my brethren, because it was essential to our design that it should be well understood by you. We shall pass more rapidly over the remaining epochs of the history of Israel. The period of the full development of the chosen nation was short as it was brilliant. After the conquest of the promised land came the troublous times of the judges, so fertile in disasters and in deliverances. The moral fluctuations of the people, who alternated between the worship of the true God and idolatry, were attended by corresponding changes in their destiny. When they abandoned God they were forsaken by Him, and then came chastisements. When they humbled themselves under His rod, a deliverer was raised up, a type of the future Redeemer, who should

come in a time of deepest humiliation. The figure of Samuel, who was in a special sense the Seer, shines with a mild light during this gloomy period. It was he who anointed the first king of Israel. Until then the invisible king had sufficed. External royalty was the fruit of unbelief; but God, bringing good out of evil, made the king an august type of the promised Messiah. Prophecy gained another trait by which to depict beforehand the image of the Saviour. The king after God's own heart was David. He was taken from the desert like all God's greatest servants, and often sent thither again during that time of probation which preceded his actual kingship. Afflictions seemed as it were interlaced with blessings in his life, which was at once so human and so pious. The reign of David, and of Solomon his son, carried the glory of Judaism to its culminating point. After their days it began to decline, though spiritually it still lasted; for we may well comprehend within the period of the full development of the ancient covenant, the epoch of the four great prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, and Ezekiel. Let us inquire into the results of this period as regards the work of preparation. It is characterized especially by the magnificent putting forth of prophecy, as that which preceded it had been by the display of the severities of the law.

We must not suppose, however, that in the era signalized by the appearance of the great prophets, the law was silent. It is a false and exclusive notion to represent the prophet's mission as consisting simply in the revealing of the future. He was a man of the law as well as of the promise. The Hebrew word by which he is called signifies primarily minister, witness for God. It was not only said to him: "Comfort ye,

comfort ye, my people;" but also: "Announce to them my wrath." Who ever uttered more terrible anathemas against sinners than the prophets? Who painted the iniquity of Israel in more fearful colours? To employ their own metaphor, they write the sin of Judah with a pen of iron and with the point of a diamond.¹ They engrave it upon the table of their heart and on the horns of their altars. If they call on heaven and earth to keep silence, it is that they may tell of the ingratitude of Israel. The Eternal has put into their hand, which is that of the law, the cup of His anger, and they cause all the nations to drink of it, Jerusalem first, and the cities of Judah with the kings and princes thereof, Pharaoh king of Egypt, and all the mingled people of Arabia, Edom, Moab, Tyre, Sidon, and all the kings of the North.²

But at the same time that they prophesy against the sinner by the commandment of God, they also announce the miracles of divine love. They complete the picture of the expected future, representing it in colours so true that they sometimes seem rather to be relating past events than foretelling those which were to come. Let us take up the predictions concerning the Messiah where we left them. We heard them last from the lips of Jacob. We know even from the promise given in Eden that the Saviour was to be the Son of man. We have learned to what family He should belong, *i. e.*, to that of Judah. In the family of Judah, He was to be a son of David. But prophecy is not contented with indicating His genealogy: it also describes His mission. The earliest oracles preserved a grand generality. They told only of a triumph over evil, of a blessing that should come upon all the nations of the earth. With Moses the

¹ Jer. xvii. 1.² Jer. xxv.

prophets take a step farther. "The Lord thy God," said he to the people of Israel, "will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken."¹ We have here not merely the deliverer but also the prophet, the witness for God, the revealer. With David, prophecy becomes still more precise. It is not the prophet only, but also the king! "I have set my king," said God, "upon my holy hill of Zion. Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession."² Soon afterwards we find not only the prophet and the king, but also the sacrifice. "He shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: He hath no form nor comeliness: He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows: He hath borne our griefs: He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities. It pleased the Lord to bruise Him; but when His soul shall make an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days. He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied. My righteous servant shall justify many."³ Triumph through suffering, salvation springing from the death of the Just One,—it is in this thought that the gospel and the earliest promise meet; it is the serpent crushed by the heel that he had bruised.

Here, then, my brethren, let us stay for a moment, to consider in what form prophecy is as it were enveloped. It is very important that we should have correct ideas on this subject, lest we should materialize the oracles of God. The form is essentially symbolic.

¹ Deut. xviii. 15.

² Ps. ii. 6-8.

³ Isa. liii.

The prophet paints the future through the features of the present, with colours and figures furnished by the country and the period in which he is placed. This is the only way in which he could make himself understood. The customs of his nation, the facts most generally known, compose for him a rich and glowing language in which to reproduce the revelations that he has received. A literal interpretation of prophecy is therefore senseless, since it confounds the sign with the thing signified, words with ideas, the vesture with the body. Again, the prophet generally speaks of events near and immediate, but the prophetic spirit runs in a sense through all his words, and these events become the type of others infinitely more important in their bearing. Jesus Christ, in the ruin of Jerusalem, describes the end of the world, the two predictions being, as it were, interlaced with each other. The establishment of the kingdom of God upon earth was announced to the Israelites under the figure of the conquest of Canaan. The prophets of the period at which we have arrived represent the destinies of God's kingdom in the future under the figure of the Jewish theocracy. Sion, its temple, its worship, its history, furnish them with the most admirable symbols. To understand their descriptions literally, would be to transport the prose of our cold West into the brilliant and poetic East. When the prophets speak of the Messiah they do so symbolically. We doubt not that the Psalms which relate to Him, applied in an inferior sense to David or Solomon, or to the Israelitish kings in general; but as the Messiah was to be the one real king of Israel the predictions applied also in a higher sense to Him. The whole of Judaism points to Christ and prophesies of Him. Present facts never

exhaust this latent prophecy—all relates definitively to Him. This very simple idea is of a nature to dissipate many forced interpretations which, in order to make certain passages in the New Testament correspond to others in the Old, do violence to the text. The positive predictions which relate exclusively to the Messiah have always a typical veil; they are sometimes spoken of David, sometimes of Cyrus. It is the same with the oracles which concern the development of the work of salvation—the return from captivity prefigures, as did formerly the conquest of Canaan, the consolation and triumph of the people of God. They are naturally called Israel by the prophet,—later they will be called the Church. This beautiful name is not for ever to belong exclusively to the descendants of Abraham. The prophets themselves, when announcing the effusion of the spirit, predict that the time shall come when “all the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord; and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before Him.”¹ A new people shall spring up to be a witness of this grand spectacle. As to the predictions regarding the distant future of the Church, we leave them on one side, for they do not belong to our subject, although we are deeply convinced that the same method of interpretation ought to be applied to them. Let us only add that this spiritualistic interpretation in no way prevents our admitting that the kingdom of God will triumph even over the external world; for us, as for others, the new heavens and the new earth are a reality.

Revelation was gloriously developed in the fruitful age of David and the four great prophets. Never was the awful mission of the law more forcibly carried

¹ Ps. xxii. 27.

out; never was the hope of pardon aroused by clearer oracles of prophecy. It remains for us to inquire whether this double word of God was heard and received by men; in other words, whether the object of revelation was attained. We have in our sacred books the most beautiful and affecting proofs that while God spake, man, under the influence of His Spirit, heard and understood. The life of the saints under the old dispensation, that humble and pious life of faith, marked by a character of such patient submission during this lengthened probation, was in itself a response to the appeals of God. But there is one part of the Old Testament which introduces us to a closer acquaintance with these saints; we no longer listen only to the word of God sounding from heaven, but also hear its lively echo in the heart of man. The oracles of the inspired writers are as it were interrupted by the overflowings of their believing souls. First, we have the bitter complaining of Job, that wail of desolation in which the afflicted of all ages have mingled their tears. Who has ever mourned human sorrows like Job? Who has better sounded their depths? "Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night in which it was said, There is a man child conceived."¹ Next comes the melancholy discouraged strain of Ecclesiastes: "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." The sad contrasts of human life have been well understood. Could the conviction of sin be better expressed than in these words: "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way?"² You recognize here the voice of Isaiah. Listen again to the weeping prophet seated on the smoking ruins

¹ Job iii. 3.² Isa. liii. 6.

of his Jerusalem, and speaking in the name of his people: "I am the man that hath seen affliction.¹ Mine eyes do fail with tears. Behold, O Lord; for I am in distress: mine heart is turned within me; for I have grievously rebelled." Harken once more to one of the later prophets, as he pours out his soul before God: "O Lord, the great and dreadful God, we have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have rebelled. O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto Thee, but unto us confusion of faces. O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against Thee."² But this wail of mourning which passes from one inspired mouth to another, is not the only sound that rises to heaven. The song of hope is also lifted up. Sometimes it is peaceful in its trust: "To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses;" at others it is mingled still with sadness. Jeremiah, after saying, "I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay," continues thus: "Sing unto the Lord, praise ye the Lord; for He hath delivered the soul of the poor from the hand of evil-doers."³ Often is the strain replete with energetic assurance: "The chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed." The sorrow and the hope which combine in the holy desire of salvation, have thus found the most touching, the most sublime utterance.

But there is one book of the Old Testament in which these are brought before us in a manner still more striking. This book, in which the most ardent and pious heart is fully unveiled before us, enables us to read revelation no longer on tables of stone, but in the impressions of a sacredly penetrated soul. Who

¹ Lam. iii. 1.

² Dan. ix. 4. 8.

³ Jer. xx. 9, 13.

has not divined that we speak of the Psalms, those immortal prayers which, in the most solemn hours of life, are ever on our lips as the perfect expression of all that man can ask from God? In the Psalms we hear the voice of elect humanity responding to the appeals of divine love, and recounting with emotion all that it owes to the unwearied acting of grace. We have witnessed the external operation of this grace in the institutions and the history of the people of Israel. Now we see its internal action, and behold the blessed fruit of this work of love. In David's soul it appears before us—in that soul, so human, so sensitive, which discloses itself in words so tender and so fervent, we hear the sighs and the gracious exercises of all the pious Israelites. It is truly the harp of Zion. What does it say to God? By His law and by the severity of His justice He has sought to produce in man the conviction of sin: listen, then, to this bitter complaint of the prophet-king, and acknowledge that the end of the Lord has been fully attained: "When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring; my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned. Hide Thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: Thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit."¹ In this melting of the proud heart of man, in this breaking of his spirit, we see the most complete accomplishment of God's designs. Sacrifice is viewed in its prophetic sense; this first object of the old covenant is realized. And is the second less fully accomplished? You know that God wished to deve-

¹ Ps xxxii. 3, 4; li. 3, 4, 9, 16, 17.

lop the hope of forgiveness. But is not that hope manifested by the very form of prayer which David gives to his confession? His faith in the reconciliation is so firm that he enjoys by anticipation the most glorious results of the redeeming work: "Blessed," he cries, "is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity. I acknowledged my sin unto Thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin."¹ The hope is as firm as the repentance was earnest. Never before was faith in salvation manifested in so intelligent a manner. Severe laws, minute regulations, exclusive priesthood, strictly kept Sabbath, bloody sacrifices,—never more will we take offence at what has often seemed strange in your character. Your full justification meets our eyes in this penitent sinner. Nor will we call the oracles of the prophets incomprehensible, for this cry of hope reveals their mighty effect. At the close of this period, as at that of the preceding one, we recognize that the divine seed has been received into the human soul. The Saviour is nearer to the lost race, for the desire which calls for Him is more positive and ardent. The work of preparation has taken an immense step forwards.

And yet this was not its last! The heart of man is so hard that heavier trials still were needed to break it. It has the fatal art of turning against itself the best gifts of God. Thus did it attempt to spoil the institutions which were designed to prepare for the coming of the Saviour, and which had indeed no other object. Judaism may be compared to a vast ship

¹ Ps. xxxii. 1, 2, 5.

admirably constructed, with solid masts and sails unfurled, waiting only for a favourable wind. Without the breath of heaven the ship is useless—it is but an inert mass. The breeze which was needed to swell the sails of Judaism was just the desire of the Christ. If this was wanting Judaism was like an immovable and useless vessel, and unfortunately this is what it tended to become. The Jews admired the beauty of its appearance, and forgot that its only destination was to conduct them to the haven of salvation. They settled themselves in the preparatory economy as if it had been a final one. The sail was no longer unfurled before the wind of heaven. It was necessary that the external glory of their institutions should be tarnished, that the theocracy should be humbled and abased, in order that aspirations towards heaven might take the place of barren satisfaction in that which was present. The humiliations of Judaism were of two kinds. They bore first on the political life of the nation and then on its institutions. The first preceded the second, and this fact it is which has permitted us to comprehend within the flourishing period of revelation the prophets of the captivity. The abasement of the theocracy begins with the reign of the son of Solomon. The schism which destroyed the unity of the people of God by cutting off ten branches from the sacred trunk, was decline in its commencement. For some time the ten separated tribes still preserved a religious connection with the tribe of Judah, though it was often broken by idolatry. Two great prophets, Elijah and Elisha, were granted to them, whose oracles have not come down to us, but we know that they were indomitable witnesses of the holiness of God in a dark age. Soon

however this feeble tie was dissolved. The ten tribes were conquered and carried far away. A small remnant alone remained, and this, mingled with a motley company of heathens, formed the Samaritan nation. The tribes of Judah and Benjamin continued the true Israelitish tradition, but their frequent falls into idolatry brought on them the heaviest chastisements from God. Of these the most remarkable was the captivity of seventy years in Babylon. The return hence, a sublime type of the spiritual deliverance of humanity, seemed to inaugurate a new era of glory. Ezra and Nehemiah remind us of the ancient leaders of Israel. The institutions of Mosaism, which had been more or less forgotten, now flourish again. A second temple is erected. But the independence of the Jews is not of long duration. They share in the fluctuations of the history of Asia at the time of the dismemberment of Alexander's empire. The heroic sword of the Maccabees for a moment delivers them from the yoke of the stranger; but very soon it falls on them again more heavily than before. The Roman domination encloses them in that immense chain which bound well nigh the whole of the known world. A proconsul exacts respect for the eagles of Rome in towns where David and Solomon have reigned. It is a terrible humiliation for this people, whose patriotism amounted to fanaticism. But their spiritual humiliations were greater still. The visible glory of God never appeared in the second temple. Prophecy was hushed after the twelve minor prophets. Moral dissertations were heard, such as the Book of Wisdom, but the breath of the Spirit is not in these learned and philosophical pages. The temple existed still, the ceremonies were regularly performed in it day by

day, a multitude surrounded it at the great festivals ; but it was now only a magnificent monument of the past—revelation spoke no more. How greatly humbled must the Jews of this sad period have felt when comparing themselves with their ancestors ! What a difference between the words of the doctors of the law and the mighty voice of the prophets ! We shall have occasion, when we come to the life of the Saviour, to depict more minutely the condition of Judaism at this time. We have said enough now to indicate how low it had fallen. Ah well ! its decline wonderfully furthered the designs of God. It brought to perfection the work of preparation.

But forget not, my brethren, that if prophecy spoke not anew, the great voice of the ancient prophets resounded still in Jerusalem. The contrast between the present condition of the Jews and the sublime future which was promised to them was of a nature to develop an inexpressible desire for the Redeemer. It was impossible to rest satisfied with institutions which had not prevented the subjugation of Judea. It was inevitable to cast a glance beyond. It was with the Jews then as it had been with their ancestors in the desert, on the borders of Canaan. The lassitude caused by the burning sky, the barren sand, the bare and gloomy ground, impelled them to dwell by anticipation on that happy moment when they should enter the smiling and fertile country. We have even in the Gospels proofs of this universal expectation. A man no sooner appeared calling himself the Messiah, but he was followed with the greatest eagerness. John the Baptist—the humble and brave forerunner, was taken for the Redeemer Himself. Art thou He that should come ? was the question put to him on all

sides. These desires were undoubtedly among the great mass of the people gross and materialistic, but they still prove that the work of preparation was approaching its consummation. Moreover, there were some souls in which, as on an altar preserved from all profane contact, there burned the pure fire of the true desire of salvation. Marvel not that these were few in number. The seed of the serpent is ever in the majority here below. But these few souls were no less certainly the true humanity—humanity after God. Their spiritual development was the most beautiful and perfect fruit of the work of preparation. It shewed that elect humanity was ready to receive the divine Son who was to bruise the head of the enemy. And here, my brethren, we are not left to suppositions, but have positive proofs in the Gospels. Look at that aged man and woman in the temple of the Lord, who were waiting for the consolation of Israel with confidence so firm that they knew they should not die till their eyes had beheld the Saviour. Read the song of Zacharias on the birth of John the Baptist, and that of Simeon when he took the infant Jesus in his arms, and you will confess that never before had the desire of salvation been so admirably expressed. There is no longer anything that is vague, but they speak of “The salvation prepared before the face of all people;—a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of Israel.”¹ The sufferings of Christ are hinted at under the symbol of that sword which should pierce the heart of Mary.

The mother of Jesus herself supplies the most touching proof that the preparation is completed, for she seems to us in her dispositions of mind and heart

¹ Luke ii., 3-32.

a personification of the elect humanity that was destined to receive the Saviour. Fear not, my brethren, that we should fall into superstitious ideas on this subject. We repel with indignation the thought of worshipping the mother of Jesus. But however strong be this indignation, we feel convinced that it could never equal that which Mary would herself experience could she see her image on the altar. We firmly believe, however, that she presented to grace a soul well prepared, and that she was so full of the hope and the desire of salvation that she represented our poor fallen race on the day when she gave birth to the divine Child. This is why the new dogma, proclaimed by the Bishop of Rome, strikes at the principal foundation of Christianity. If the mother of Jesus were not truly a daughter of man,—if she belonged not actually to our poor fallen humanity, then Jesus Christ did not assume human nature, and could not be the Mediator. He is not in that case the Son of man, but the son of some imaginary humanity dwelling in a cloud between earth and heaven. There was not then that necessary meeting between God who gives and the human soul that receives His gifts with the joy and eagerness of a holy desire. Mary could not have felt the desire of salvation if she had not been a sinful creature. It was precisely because having sinned she had wept over her misery, and sighed for the Redeemer, that she was chosen to give Him birth through the power of the Holy Ghost. She was only deemed worthy to be the mother of the Saviour because of the profound conviction which she had of her own unworthiness. O Virgin of Nazareth, if thou wert blessed above women, it was because thou wert the humblest

of them all! Humble was thy position; though a daughter of the kings of thy people thou didst hide in obscurity thy noble origin, and representedst in thine own abasement that which was proper to thy nation. Humble was thy soul, and the song in which its feelings are disclosed to us is the purest and most spiritual expression of that desire of salvation of which thou didst represent the complete maturity: "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour."¹ You hear—it is of the Saviour that she speaks;—He is not simply in her eyes, the king, the prophet, the sacrifice. He is all these together, for He is the Saviour. "He hath regarded the low estate of His handmaiden." Here are the words of humiliation waited for during so many ages. Let us not deprive Mary of this conviction of her lowness! To bring men to such sentiments God had not ceased to abase them at His feet. "He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts; He hath put down the mighty from their seats." Satan is vanquished—he should know it by these words, for humanity, by the mouth of Mary, confesses its nothingness, and mourns its rebellion. "He hath exalted them of low degree." The low, the little—these are God's chosen ones—and it is because she is of this blessed number that she can add: "He hath remembered His mercy!" Yes, He has indeed remembered it; already has the angel Gabriel announced to her the birth of her Saviour. She confesses in the name of our fallen race her meanness and her condemnation, and she clearly sees the mercy of her God. The time is ripe; nothing remains to be added to the desire of salvation. Therefore does she

¹ Luke i., 46-47.

already bear within her the divine seed 'promised to humanity during so many ages.

Nothing would now be left to us, my brethren, but to trace out for you the life of Christ, if we needed not first to shew how God had, though in a less direct manner, prepared man outside of Judaism to sigh after the Deliverer. This will be the object of our next lecture.

It seems to us that the result of our present discourse is a serious call to conversion addressed to our souls. This immense work of preparation, which we have endeavoured to unfold before your eyes, had as its object salvation for each one of you. Yes, my brother, whoever thou mayest be, though the most miserable and the meanest of mankind, God was thinking of your soul during the whole course of the ancient dispensation. For it was the infinite chain of His revelations laid down. He was preparing your salvation in those first days under the trees of Eden, when He promised to Adam the divine posterity that should bruise the serpent's head, during the patriarchal period when He conversed with Abraham, when the angel of His presence broke bread with him at Mamre, and when He strove with Jacob by the brook. He was preparing it in the chosen people; in their deliverances and their chastisements, in the desert as in the promised land. He was preparing it when from the top of Sinai He revealed His terrible law, and when He announced by the lips of Moses the great prophet who should save His people. On the altar of sacrifice also, in the solemn feasts, and in those innumerable ordinances designed to impress on the heart of Israel the meaning of his election. He was preparing it by the oracles of His great prophets,

by the penitent tears of David, as by the ardent and sublime hymn of Isaiah, in the glories as in the humiliations of the theocracy, on the ruins of Jerusalem as by the rivers of Babylon; and in the latest and worst of sorrows, when the stranger trod as a conqueror the sacred ground. If God, according to Christ's saying, has wrought from the beginning of the world, it is for thee, my brother! His eye discerned thee in thy obscurity, hidden in thy generation. The salvation which He prepared was not a collective but an individual salvation; it was salvation for thee. And now it is thine to determine whether the labour of so many ages shall be useless. By refusing to be converted thou wouldst render it so as far as is in thy power. Thou wouldst make it abortive as regards thine own soul. It would be in vain that God should have, during four thousand years, smitten, blessed, humbled, exalted humanity. O my brother, wilt thou repay with such ingratitude this persevering love? Wilt thou mar the plan of divine mercy? Wilt thou render barren so many revelations, so many prophecies? Shall it be in vain that the arm of the Lord has been put forth with power so vast, that His mouth has spoken in accents so paternal? In vain! No, that cannot be. Others will receive the salvation which thou refusest. It will be with thee as with those Israelites who, after forty years of journeying in the wilderness, fell dead on the frontiers of Canaan. They already saw the wonderful land; their feet touched its soil, but they doubted God, and their long pilgrimage resulted only in bitter disappointment. Since the work of preparation has ended, we dwell on the borders of the spiritual Canaan. Shall we fall there like the unbelieving Israelites?

Oh ! rather let us acknowledge that the Lord has done everything to facilitate our entrance ; let us be convinced by those numberless revelations which have led us to the threshold of the true land of promise, and let us penetrate therein in the steps of the divine Joshua, blessing the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of David, Isaiah, and Daniel, the God of Simeon and of Mary, the God of the patriarchs, prophets, and saints. And to Him be all the glory, from age to age, of the work which He has accomplished for us under the old as well as under the new dispensation !

IV.

THE PREPARATION FOR THE COMING OF JESUS CHRIST.

Discourse III.

PREPARATION IN PAGANISM.

ACTS xvii. 16-34.

WE have sketched in its great outlines the preparation for the coming of Christ in the history of the people of Israel. I shall now call your attention to a subject too much neglected,—I mean the work of preparation in the heathen world. Here, as always, the doctrine of the Bible is infinitely broader than the theology of men. While representing the Jewish people as the sole recipients of positive revelation, it includes other nations in the vast plan of redemption, and shews us the finger of God in their history also. “God,” says St. Paul, “hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation.” Thus the historical development of these nations, the frame-work even of that development, was ordered by God; and as everything works and concurs in His hand for the realization of the plan of salvation, we may be assured that

the history of the heathen nations before Christ tended to prepare for His coming. We are never weary of repeating that the special elections of God are designed for the greatest good of humanity, which is itself His great election so long as it does not thwart the purposes of His love by the persistency of its rebellion. It has not in the past any more than in the present been altogether left to itself. The God of Abraham has not ceased to be the God of Adam. If He developed the desire of salvation in the posterity of the patriarchs, He developed it also, though less directly, beyond the limits of the favoured people. We have the most striking proof of this in the facility with which Christianity was propagated in the pagan world. It seemed like an incendium, which spread on the wings of the wind when once the first flame had burst forth, because all was ready to take fire. Three centuries had not elapsed before the Christians could say to the heathens: "We fill your cities, we form your armies, we are everywhere." Who does not see that the times were ripe; that the furrows had been cut out to receive eternal truth? And unless we suppose that they opened of themselves without God's operation, we must recognize the action of grace in this happy preparedness. If the persecutions inflicted by the heathens on the Christians should be brought forward as an objection to our view, we will reply that the Jewish people did what was still worse; they put to death the Son of God himself, and yet they were God's people. We must always consider not the unbelieving masses, but the individuals who have stood out from among these to receive the appeals which God has addressed to them by divers means.

We require, then, to determine the nature and to trace the history of this preparation in the heathen world, and that we may not be led astray by vain suppositions we will ground our thoughts on the admirable discourse of Paul at Athens, which comprehends all that we need to know on this important subject. We shall bring forward nothing that is new, our point of view will be that of the ancient Christian church. The fathers of the three first centuries loudly assert that there were in heathen antiquity many noble spirits who, unconsciously to themselves, sighed after the great Deliverer. They collect these sighs with care; they invoke in their apologies the testimony of those poets or philosophers who, in the midst of thickest darkness, have shed forth some ray of truth. The idea had not yet arisen of regarding the appearance of Christianity as a fact wholly isolated in the history of humanity. Those noble Christians of early times were persuaded that there is a close connection between Christ and conscience, and they never failed to set this forth while chronicling with incomparable energy the crimes and disgraces of paganism. Tertullian fears not to cite the human soul as a witness to the truth. He goes so far as to declare that it is not naturally Christian, in such a sense as to need no regeneration, but that, unless its true nature be falsified by sophism, its spontaneous cry is a prayer to the God of the Gospel. "Thou art not, as far as I know," he says to the soul, "Christian by nature; thou art not born Christian, but must become so. Nevertheless Christians invoke thy testimony."¹ Justin Martyn goes farther still. He recog-

¹ Tertullian, *De testimonio animæ*, c. i.

nizes in the earnest men of pagan times a seed of the eternal Word, undeveloped, incomplete, but still most precious. "Every one," he says, "by the germ of the divine Word which is within him, sees that part of truth which is congenial to himself."¹ Clement of Alexandria, while pointing out the inferiority of the high culture of Greece as compared with the Hebrew revelation, sees in it, nevertheless, because of the portion of truth which it contained, a gift of God.² As having awakened the conscience which was asleep beneath the altars of false gods, it has been a school-master to lead unto Christ.³ It has been like a flickering candle, and has only to be extinguished before the radiant sun;⁴ and forget not that this large-minded apology for Christianity was put forth by martyrs, and that Justin who, first among the fathers, sought to connect the Gospel with the noblest aspirations of high Grecian culture, afterwards died for his faith. These facts will re-assure you, proving convincingly that these heroic defenders of Christianity made no concession to error, and that if they sought in the impure ruins of sinking paganism for some fragments of truth, it was with the holy desire of winning souls to Christ by becoming, like St. Paul, all things to all men. Therefore did they crowd around them, drawn by the loadstone of genuine sympathy, united to a solid belief, those earnest men who, eager for faith and for consolation, had asked them in vain from the philosophy of their time. At Alexandria a large school of catechumens was founded, and Clement and

¹ Justin, *Apologia*, I., p. 51 (τὸ συγγενὲς ὁρῶν).

² Clement, *Stromata*, II., 15 (δωρεὰ Θεοῦ).

³ *Strom.* II. 20.

⁴ *Strom.* II. 63 (ὡς λύχνος πρὸ ἡλίου).

Origen were surrounded by a multitude from the most different points of the empire. They had found at last, in place of the frigid doctors or the puerile rhetoricians to whom they were accustomed, men who understood their anxieties through having experienced them, and who could discern in their present beliefs a basis for the new and definitive faith. Let us beware that we be not narrow as to doctrine and broad as to practical concessions;—that is to say, narrow for others and broad for ourselves. It is not permitted to the Christians of our day to accuse those of the first three centuries of a spirit of exaggerated concession. Such a reproach springing from halls of luxury to bring blame on the Church which suffered and was crucified like its Master,—such a reproach, I say, would be a scandal. It would be chargeable with heresy; for it would touch the great Apostle of the Gentiles, who first set the example to the fathers in his discourse at Athens.

It is clear, then, that our point of view is that of the apostolic church, or that church which was in immediate contact with the pagan world. The contrary notion, which denies all work of preparation outside of Judaism is new and foreign to the true tradition of the Church, by which I understand the tradition of the Bible. It is, then, with great freedom that I enter on this important subject, which gives its full breadth to the work of preparation, and consequently to the work of redemption. We shall have to discover in what manner God developed the desire of salvation among those heathen nations which have most powerfully influenced the destinies of the world. You will understand that we allude to the Greeks and Romans. I shall connect all my illustrations with the

discourse of Paul, of which I will first offer a succinct analysis. Taking advantage of the altar to the unknown God which he had seen in the city of Athens, he addressed himself to that religious need which this fact implied; and starting from the general idea of the Deity and of the relation sustained to Him by man, which had already been recognized by a heathen poet, he announced to the Athenians the true God, who cannot be contained in a material temple, who is near to each one of us, and who, after a time of ignorance, had revealed truth and salvation in Jesus Christ, and given us in Him the pledge of the resurrection. I need not follow the apostle's every word, but only fix your attention on what directly concerns the work of preparation in heathendom.

But let us here make one preliminary remark, *i. e.*, that historical revelation was not absolutely withheld from pagan nations, but is met with everywhere in its essential features. It would seem to have been with these universal traditions as with those remains which the waters of the deluge have carried into so many countries, across plains and over mountains. The tide of primitive emigrations spread in like manner the dogmas of the fall and of redemption, often altered and disguised, indeed, but still recognizable in spite of the wild growths by which they have been covered and well nigh concealed. It is allowed that the nations nearest to the chosen people have best preserved these traditions which belong to all humanity. Notwithstanding the high barriers raised between different nationalities, all contact between them could not be prevented. The nearer we approach to the epoch that witnessed the Saviour's birth the more frequent does the contact become. The dismemberment

of the vast monarchy of Alexander even brought together Europe and Asia. The Roman empire rendered the clashing or rather the mingling of ideas and beliefs more complete, more universal. The revelation given to the Jews, without being correctly known, diffused itself at least as an influence through the moral atmosphere, and we must never forget this method in which the oracles of God operate, for it is very powerful though difficult of appreciation. No one will dispute the importance of this fact. But we must not exaggerate its weight by supposing that there was no other trace of divine working in the pagan world than these fragments of revelation which had gradually entered into the circulation of the ideas of the period. We believe that there was a more direct preparation developing the desire of salvation, and we are supported in our belief by St. Paul.

He, in fact, cites a very remarkable expression from a profane author: "We are the offspring of God," the poet Aratus had said. The sense which the apostle gives to these words is evidently this; that the kindred of the soul with its Creator existed even among the heathen, that the relation between God and man was still found there in some degree. We may hence conclude that the heathen nations were acted on by the Spirit of God, though less directly than the chosen people. We know already in what manner this action was exercised. To develop the desire of salvation was the whole work of preparation. If the pagan nations were not abandoned by God, it follows that we shall find among them signs of a desire for the great deliverance; that is to say, signs of the conviction of condemnation and of the hope of forgiveness. I shall not repeat what was said of man in

general, when we were demonstrating that everything both in his external and internal condition reminded him of his fall, and spoke to him of hope. We must think now not of man in all times and places, but of pagans peculiarly. The question to be resolved is this : Were there in them any signs more or less developed, of a desire of salvation? The quotation of St. Paul itself supplies an affirmative answer ; all the more so as, to prove this kindred and consequently this divine action in heathen nations, he appeals to positive proofs taken from the very life of the pagans. He alludes to what he had seen in this same city of Athens. He had been struck by four characteristic facts, which bore the impress of the high destiny of man, and also of his efforts to fulfil it completely. What were these facts, and what their bearing? This we must now ask of the Apostle himself.

And, first, he had recognized, both in the public and the private life of the pagans, incontestable traces of the moral law, which speaks through conscience. Corruption no doubt abounded—it overflowed everywhere like an impure torrent ; but, even in the vilest and most degraded cities, the moral sentiment was not entirely stifled. As long as a society continues to exist, one may be quite sure that there remains some element of good in its constitution. The total absence of the moral law would be equivalent to the annihilation of the society ; there would remain nothing but a frightful and unruly struggle, without relaxation, and without result, between self-interest and ferocious passions. It would be like a desert inhabited by wild beasts. There is no society without law ; and there can be no law without the ideas of good and evil, often most deplorably false in their applications, but proving,

nevertheless, that conscience still speaks among men. It was enough for Paul to pass through a city such as Athens to find in it the social bond, which, however imperfect it might be, still constituted a moral bond—a bond with God. But the moral sentiment manifested itself even more forcibly in individual life. Had not a poet of this same Athens spoken of those eternal laws in which is a God who grows not old; laws of immutable justice, against which the unjust laws of men have to break, as against an immoveable rock?¹ Was it not in the shade of a garden, well known at Athens, that the most ideal of thinkers had developed the purest and most disinterested morality? Had he not declared that it was a thousand times better to be the victim of the wicked than to be the wicked in triumph? Had he not laid down a principle of conduct, which seems like an echo of the Gospel:—"We should in all things imitate God?" If this city had been troubled by many shameful scandals, had it not also been the witness of great acts of courage and devotedness? Was it not in one of its prisons that Socrates, though unjustly condemned, had refused to fly for fear of being guilty of the slightest deceit; and had drunk the cup of poison, as he said himself, for obeying God rather than men? How many other facts in antiquity had proved that the voice of conscience was not dumb! Such recollections as these crowded on the mind of Paul, when he said to the Athenians, "We are the offspring of God."

I well know the means employed for getting rid of the virtues which the heathen world presents to us. The famous expression is repeated: "They are but splendid sins." If it is meant that these virtues were

¹ Sophocles—*Edipus king*, v. 872

mixed with sins, we fully admit the fact; but if it is pretended that they had no reality, but were only an appearance of virtue, we deny it—we deny it with Saint Paul, who declares in his epistle to the Romans, that the pagans shew the work of the law written in their hearts.¹ The law in their hearts is one with that which was thundered from Sinai; and when it manifests itself in their life, it fulfils the same mission. It exhibits the gross darkness of the evil, which it lights up as with a passing ray; it awakens the aspiration after the holy and the just, which is in the depths of the human heart. It has also its prophetic side; for the manifestations of goodness in paganism, the acts of heroism and of devotion, were like those marvellous fruits brought one day from the land of promise to the people of Israel, while they still wandered in the desert. There is hope for the future. Conscience is a title of nobility, which gives not indeed the right to resume a rank forfeited by the fall, but which confirms, in a remarkable manner, the words of the apostle to the Athenians: “We are the offspring of God.”

These words Paul had read again and again on each of the innumerable altars which filled the most brilliant city of Greece: and here we find the second of the characteristic facts to which we have referred. “Ye men of Athens,” said Paul, at the opening of his discourse, “I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious.” He knew better than any other what a miserable thing their religion was; for he was speaking of that heathen worship which was stained with so much that was disgraceful, and which was offered to divinities so abominable. Paul had seen the famous Parthenon, that magnificent temple erected to Minerva,

¹ Rom. ii. 15.

near the citadel of Athens, in which there gleamed the gold and ivory statue of the goddess. He had passed before the temple of Jupiter; even from the wooded height on which he was then standing, his glance comprehended a multitude of statues and monuments which had each a pagan subject. All the divinities were false and corrupting. And yet the fact of a religion, however degraded it may be, is a proof that the idea of God is still in existence among men. I need not repeat what I have already said of sacrifices, which are so closely connected with a belief in redemption, and which are enough in themselves to establish the reality of the work of preparation in the pagan world. I take the fact of a religion in its grand generality, and I assert that it fully justifies the words of Paul to the Athenians: "You are the divine offspring." In spite of the errors and corruptions of your mythology, he might have said, I perceive in you the need of entering into relations with the deity. I well know that you have made idols of your own passions, and that they are enthroned on the summit of your sacred mount; but it is not the less true that you cannot dispense with a divinity of some sort. You acknowledge your dependence on a supreme power. With that you seek to be reconciled. It is that which you dread and adore whenever you are serious and earnest; and not the infamous Jupiter and his vile associates! Your devotion, whatever it be, evinces in you a mysterious anxiety regarding the wrath of the divinity, and a vague hope of appeasing it. The demons erect no temples. It is not possible to you, even in your lowest profligacy, to shake off the yoke of the divine idea; and nothing better proves its power than the fact that

it continues in existence, even while you are wishing to serve your passions only.

We find, in our text, traces of a third fact, which confirms still further this grand assertion. We read, in the eighteenth verse, that certain philosophers encountered the apostle. I do not now enquire of what school these philosophers were—I think only of that quality which was common to all; and I say that the mere fact of a search after truth reveals at once the fall and the hope of recovery. The word philosophy sounds ill in christian ears, because it speaks too often of rebellious thought, and of the pride of reason. Too often, especially since the introduction of christianity, has human philosophy been among its most active opponents; it has demanded elaborate discussions, where a heart that was right would have been satisfied to believe and obey. It has either insulted Christ, or passed Him by in disdainful silence, as having no place in its systems; or else it has sought to make Him speak on its side, surreptitiously intruding its own impious principles beneath His divine words. Rarely has it been seen kneeling by the cross, humbly seeking to sound the great mystery of love. But in pagan antiquity the case was quite otherwise. Philosophy was truly then the search after wisdom and truth. It stood in opposition to the religions of its own time, but not to religion in itself considered. It often involved a brave attempt to tear off the veil from the pagan myths, in the hope of arriving at a purer idea of God. The endeavour was indeed fruitless; for, as the apostle has said, these are things that enter not into the heart of man. Philosophy became too frequently the unworthy accomplice of moral corruption, by legitimatizing it. The Sophists were the plague of

ancient philosophy! But when we regard it as it is seen in a Socrates, or a Plato, it appears very imperfect truly, very misty in its results, but very grand in its aspirations. It has not that intractable pride which denies the fall. It recognizes it in the most affecting manner. "Formerly," says Plato, "we enjoyed a ravishing spectacle; we were initiated into mysteries which may be called blessed; and we celebrated them free from the evils and imperfections which afterwards appertained to us—we admired objects perfect, simple, full of calmness and beatitude; and contemplated them in a pure light—pure also ourselves. Let us be forgiven," he adds, and we seem to perceive the traces of a tear in his words, "let us be forgiven for the sad regrets inspired by the remembrance of the sight in which we then rejoiced."¹ I cite this passage to shew that ancient philosophy, in spite of all its wanderings, was not always a rationalistic philosophy, flattering human pride. It preserved, nay, it awakened the conviction of a fall; while its very existence proved that some hope was left to man of one day recovering the truth. It was a flickering torch, to borrow a metaphor from Clement of Alexandria,² whose trembling light could not replace the sun; and in this sense we may ask, Where is the wisdom of the wise? But it could reveal the darkness, which was something gained; and by its little ray could excite the desire that the star of the morning might arise. Faith in the immortality of the soul, in moral responsibility, in the good and the just, though insufficient to give peace to the soul, yet developed its higher instincts. In regard to salvation itself, that is to say, to absolute truth, the

¹ Plato, *Phædrus*, or *Beauty*.

² Clement of Alexandria, vol. iii. p. 22. (Leipsic Edition.)

wisdom of the Greeks, like all human wisdom, was foolishness ; but in regard to preparation, it had an important mission. However numerous and deplorable may have been the errors of its systems, we should not the less recognize in them the fact that this search after truth revealed at once the need and the possibility of redemption. Why should that be sought for which was either possessed already, or hopelessly lost? Surely we may say to our fellow men with Saint Paul, even in the view of the philosophers of the decline—Offspring of God ye are ; for if ye had not in your immortal soul a thirst after truth, ye would not make for yourselves so many cisterns, which, though broken and impure, are still evidences of that sacred yearning for the true which consumes you ; offspring of God, but offspring fallen ; for if not so, ye would still, as one of your noblest representatives has said, pure yourselves, contemplate in pure light those simple and perfect objects of absolute truth which are full of beauty and of calmness ! Fall and recovery, sorrow and hope ; the desire of salvation burns on this profane earth—the work of preparation is here carried on.

There is one more fact which might have led Paul to say, you are the divine offspring. These are not the apostle's own words, though adopted by him. He borrowed them from an ancient poet. He expresses this when he says : “ As certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also His offspring.” This last fact, then, which demonstrates the reality of the work of preparation in paganism is the existence of poetry or art. I do not wish to exaggerate the apostle's thought—he did not certainly mean to say that poetry had contributed directly to bring man back to God,

but that it had had indirectly a great effect in this direction. Its influence was especially felt in that native land of art, under that marvellous sky, in that country which seemed its chosen dwelling-place. The apostle acknowledges that the Greek poets had some presentiment of the truth. He employs their expressions to depict the high destiny of man. This is a fact the bearing of which cannot be weakened, and which was remarked by the earliest Christians.¹ Thus, then, poetry or art, to speak generally, has had its part in the work of preparation. And here, my brethren, you must rise from the imperfect and often corrupting productions of art to art itself; you must rise to the general fact present in all its divers manifestations. Too often has poetry, as well as philosophy, wrought intoxication in the poor heart of man, and bound it to earth by its fascinations. Too often has it been like those enchantresses of old, who urged to the rocks the unfortunate beings whom they had seduced,—charming only that they might destroy. But the quotation of Paul stands before us still; there are poets in his opinion who have well expressed the high origin of man; whence it follows that there are those also who have well mourned his actual condition. In fact from the depths of all poetry and of all art there rises this complaint: “We are the offspring of God, but His offspring miserably fallen.” We have seen that religion, which is the search after God, shews that we have lost God, but that we may find Him again. We have seen also that philosophy which is the search after truth, shows that we possess not truth, but that still it is not far from us. Poetry reveals the same fact in yet another sphere. It is in this world

¹ Clement of Alexandria, II., p. 64.

the pursuit of the ideal which is the supreme beauty. If you ask why we pursue it, a Greek poet will reply. According to Plato, those enjoyments which afford us the few traces of beauty that are to be found here below, are a remembrance of what the soul has seen when possessed of its true being¹—they are pale reflections of the region of absolute beauty in which man once dwelt. Poetry seeks to multiply these, and thus it recalls our high origin. If this imperfect world were our own country, we should no more regret immortal beauty than the bird of night regrets the day. We endeavour to escape from the real world, because it is for us a place of exile,—because we are the offspring of God. If our dungeon were shut in on all sides we should fall asleep within its walls. But it is not so; to employ a comparison of this same Plato's, though chained to the floor of the cave where we are imprisoned, we see painted on its walls ravishing pictures of the region of perfect beauty. Our aspirations after this beauty prove that the fallen race is not banished without hope of return. Whenever the poet or the sculptor seeks to give a transparent reality to the ideal of which he has a glance, a recollection and a hope meet in his work and constitute its greatest beauty. The recollection is sometimes bitter, like an inconsolable regret; that which is most tragic in human destiny is depicted therein; the contrast between what it ought to be and what it is in fact, is represented in a most affecting manner. The choruses of the ancient tragedy contain more than the expression of private grief; they raise towards heaven the great human lament—the lament of the fall—"Oh, unhappy race of

¹ Plato—*Phædrus*.

mortals!"¹—this is their doleful burden. Special calamities are absorbed in the universal woe. At other times it is the ideal side that appears in art. It shews us the harmony of the soul and the body fixed in a dream of beauty in the marble or on the canvass; or else it affords us a glimpse of the purest moral beauty in some sublime creation. Have we not a foretaste of Christian charity in the *Antigone* of Sophocles, when she justifies herself for having done good to her enemies in these well-nigh evangelical words: "I was not born to hate but to love!"² In other cases, as for example in the *Prometheus chained* of Eschylus, poetry predicts the fall of the pagan divinities, and speaks of a god of the future whose victorious dart should pierce them upon Olympus. In these different manifestations poetry ever sets out from the feeling of the fall, and rises in its unfettered dreaming towards the ideal, the realization of which is inseparable from the work of recovery. We can then well understand that a poet should have spoken the grand words adopted by Saint Paul. A race that cannot dwell at ease in the realities of the present, nor be satisfied with its daily food, but that shakes its destiny like a chain in the endeavour to create for itself an ideal world of beauty and perfection—this race is divine; it is not made to bend towards the ground which it tills; but, as another poet has said, fallen from heaven it remembers heaven. A desire of redemption breathes in the strains of its lyre at once so sad and so beautiful! O Athenians, your poets have not deceived you—you still belong to the offspring of God.

Thus, brethren, do the four most characteristic facts

¹ Ἰὼ γεναὶ βροτῶν.—*Cæipus king*, v. 1216. [1186 ed. Erfurdt.]

² Οὐ τοι ποθ' συνέχθειν, ἀλλὰ συμφιλεῖν ἔφυν.—*Antigone*, v. 530. [523].

of pagan antiquity come to the support of our text. I know well that they constantly appear in history tainted with sin ; devotion has been degraded by heathenism ; philosophy has too often fallen into the hands of sophists and libertines ; poetry and art have been fearfully corrupted by licentiousness, in especially later times ; human virtue has been spoiled by pride. Nevertheless these four facts taken in themselves, render testimony to the indestructible kindred of the soul with God. They shew us this soul, such as the fall and the promise have made it, obliged to seek laboriously for what was formerly its own, but daring to attempt the search in the name of a mysterious hope, which is but the distant and often feeble echo of the first promise.

Let us hasten to add, that the work of preparation would have been incomplete if it had been marked only by those general features which belonged to all times and all countries during the pagan era. A certain desire for salvation was then diffused through society, and increased when it found expression ; but more than this was needed. In the same way as the institutions given to the Jewish people were illustrated by the events of their history, so these characteristic facts of pagan life only gave forth their profound meaning through long and often repeated trials. According to the figure employed by a father of the church, the hard rind which concealed the savoury fruit needed to be broken by degrees, and for this purpose the slow labour of ages was required. The development of the destinies of pagan humanity, though often painful, realized the plan of God with regard to these nations. That which is commonly called profane history, had a divine aim ; like sacred history it tended

from beginning to end to prepare for the coming of the Redeemer. The discourse of Paul at Athens casts the most vivid light on this important subject.

We read in the twenty-sixth verse, that "God hath determined the bounds of the habitation of all nations, that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might grope after Him and find Him." Try to comprehend this thought of the apostle's, for it explains to us the whole work of preparation in paganism. He is evidently speaking here of heathen nations, for the people to whom the holy oracles were confided were not reduced to groping after God. It was designed then that these nations should endeavour to find God by groping. Did He refuse them the light of revelation in anger? No, brethren, God never refuses to give the truth; we firmly believe that if humanity as a whole had been capable of sustaining at once the full light of truth it would have been granted without delay. But human pride rendered such premature salvation impossible. Pride needed first to be broken. We have seen by what dispensations this was effected among the chosen people. That which revelation did for them, the absence of revelation, admirably characterized in our text as groping, wrought among the heathen. In Judaism God revealed Himself, but in such a way as to crush rebellion. In paganism He did not reveal Himself by a historic revelation; and wandering man, wholly lost in the maze of his own thoughts, was equally humbled. Here it was the manifestation of God's power, which subdued the creature, who was more or less left to himself, and convinced him of his own nothingness. Thus, though carried on in different ways, the work of preparation is the same, and when the times

are fulfilled, the Jew and the Gentile are alike found humbled at the foot of the cross, just as it is said that the rich and the poor meet before God. And if the heathen is not entirely without hope, this is because the Spirit of God has spoken in his heart, as He spake by the oracles of the Hebrew prophets. At the very time that he was convinced of his own nothingness, a mysterious voice told him of recovery. From one groping to another the humiliation became more complete and the hope more lively. The desire of salvation burned more brightly from time to time, from illusion to illusion.

The preparation for salvation in paganism consisted then, according to St. Paul, in a long and overwhelming experience of human impotence; a series of fruitless attempts to find God; a groping onwards towards the light. This great work was completed when man, overpowered by a darkness almost as thick at the end as at the beginning of history, uttered a long cry of distress. That this sad period went by so slowly must be attributed only to the obstinacy of the illusions of pride. It was not through the good pleasure of God that ages of darkness succeeded each other. We know not which is most inconceivable in this prolongation of the pagan era—the patience of divine love or the stubbornness of human pride.

These gropings of humanity, seeking its God by itself, we cannot now describe,¹ but shall confine ourselves to reminding you of the most remarkable instances. We distinguish three periods in the history of paganism, which seem like the three principal gropings along this gloomy road. All nations, of

¹ A complete picture of the history of ancient religions may be found in the Introduction to our *History of the Three First Centuries of the Church*.

course, did not pass at once from one period to another. There are some, indeed, whom we may call the laggards of religious history, for they have remained till now in the first groping. Of these we shall take no account, as we wish to speak only of those nations that played a part on the true theatre of history before Jesus Christ. These, then, passed through three principal phases. Strange to say, their first step was their lowest fall. The first groping of humanity consisted in the grossest idolatry. Man took for his God that which he found under his hand, *i. e.*, inert matter, or rather nature, the external world both in its attractive and its terrible aspects. The religions of nature are at once voluptuous and sanguinary, debasing and savage; the powers of production and of destruction both are worshipped. The impure Astarte and the cruel Baal, to whom little children were sacrificed, are the two essential divinities of these gross religions; their worship is a medley of revelry and murders. The Old Testament paints these rites in the most hideous colours, as practised by some of the Canaanitish races. In such religions you find no moral idea; they do not even rise to the distinction of good and evil, for nature contains not any of the revelations of conscience, and her worshipper finds in her nought but blind forces. The refined pantheism of India is very superior to the gross naturalism of Asia Minor; but even this only leads to the most extravagant asceticism, which would absorb the whole world in the abyss of absolute being.

Humanity cannot rest in this first stage of its journey; it gropes onwards still. The Persian religion is an attempt to escape from the religions of nature, but an attempt that only half succeeds. Light and

darkness, Ormuzd and Ahriman, belong still to the lower sphere. The moral world is not reached. Thus this new religion cannot mark a second period, which begins only among the Greeks. From groping to groping man had now come to conceive of the divinity under the human form. In a splendid climate, with a race young and endowed with brilliant genius, this idea rapidly flourished, and was delineated in most poetic colours. Man imagined himself at the end of his groping. He had a moment of enchantment. The heaven was blue above his head; he was in the strength of his youth. To celebrate his new deity he had the most gifted poets, whose creations are eternally fresh and enchanting; to represent the divine beauty he had the chisel of a Phidias and a Praxiteles. He worshipped on Olympus, and in splendid sanctuaries. But in fact he worshipped everywhere, and without ceasing. Was not a Grecian city a great temple erected to humanity? Was it not humanity that was fêted in the gymnasium, in the solemn games, in the theatres? Grecian life, glowing brightly beneath the sun, was a joyous worship of man. Patriotism, the love of country, and of human society, was, to speak truly, the most serious religion of that day. The care of his dignity was to the Greek the essence of virtue. Humanity believed it had nothing left to desire; did not a divinity sharing its own nature answer to its every need? We should be ready to admit that it did if the gods worshipped in Greece had been true gods; if they had descended from heaven to invest and purify human nature. Not to make the divinity spring from the earth, to place him in some sort in man while yet unregenerated, this is the worst of illusions, and we shall soon see to what

results it led. There is no God-man possible but through an incarnation. This enchantment, this festival of Grecian life, could not last, thank God. This Eden, attempted in a world of sin, must be closed like the other. Grecian paganism, even in its most flourishing epoch, contained the germ of its own destruction. Grecian thought, even while deifying humanity, was the first to touch on a domain superior to the religions of nature. The moral idea is too closely linked with humanity not to emerge gradually beneath the eyes of its admirers. Conscience, in the East almost entirely asleep, re-appears in Greece, and with it the vengeful flame that shall consume paganism. Grecian legislation is infinitely superior to that of the East. A certain severe morality pervades the highest literature. But the moral idea only develops itself in opposition to paganism. Socrates and Plato give it its sublimest expression outside of revelation, and well-nigh lead to the worship of one God. Philosophy was the most energetic foe to Grecian paganism. Scarcely had man congratulated himself that he no longer needed to grope his way, when he was compelled to resume his journey and his uncertain researches. He will only have ended them when he shall fall by the way overcome with grief and fatigue.

This grief and this weariness characterize the last period of the history of paganism. Many circumstances led to them—one of the most important being indisputably the extension of the Roman domination, which, by connecting the gods of all countries, set them forth in combination. They could not be brought together without being destroyed. The triumph of Rome was, moreover, the result of a great number of checks and sufferings of all kinds. Rome

herself, to use the beautiful image of an old writer, when she had vanquished the world, was like a gladiator who, after triumphing over his antagonists, can but turn his sword against his own breast. Humiliations on the one hand, satiety on the other, the wide spreading scepticism engendered by the confronting of different religions with one another, the delicate flower of poetic Grecian paganism spoiled by the rude hands that held the nations in chains, the exhaustion of vigour in the old age of the race : all these causes combined together, brought on an epoch of bitter and universal delusion. The attempt to find God had shamefully failed. Humanity was groping everywhere, east, west, north, and south, and finding nothing. It cursed the divinities that it knew ; and, with the relics of all their temples, it built an altar to the unknown God. This is the most solemn moment in the history of ancient nations ; for it is the completion of the work of preparation. I shall, therefore, call your attention more particularly to this last period of paganism, so admirably characterized in the words of Saint Paul. The desire of salvation burns on this altar to the unknown God, for it is made out of the relics of paganism, and is, at the same time, an effort towards christianity. It sums up, as we think, the latest phase of pagan antiquity, in its delusions and its aspirations. Delusion, aspiration, all is comprised in these two words. To this point God had designed to bring humanity, by one fruitless search after another.

You meet with bitter incurable delusions in every sphere of life, national and individual. Many proofs of this fact were furnished by the city through which the apostle had been passing. And, first, what cruel delusions in social relations ! You know the import-

ance attached to public life among the pagans. It absorbed that of the individual. Everything was viewed in its relation to the state; men lived, as it were, in the forum. The Athenian had long been able to honour his country, for it was free and flourishing in spite of its littleness. Had it not driven back the fleets and armies of the great king at Salamis and Marathon? The defence of its liberty, the jealous care of its interests and its glory, had roused the enthusiasm of the Athenians for ages past. It cannot be disputed that the feeling of human dignity was very keen in these little republics; their agitations, their struggles even, had raised it to an indomitable fierceness; but these times of glory and of liberty were times also of incurable pride. And now what had become of that national independence which inspired the finest discourses of human eloquence? Attica is a Roman province; proconsuls have come from Rome to defraud it. No more animated discussions, no more passionate harangues! The people still come together in public places; but the sacred historian tells us that it is only to hear some new thing. And that which happened at Athens happened also elsewhere. Liberty everywhere disappeared, and Rome herself became the most subject of cities. The times of the tribunes were never more to return. A great writer of the period expresses its abasement in one word: "consuls, senators, knights, all," says he, "rushed emulously into slavery;"¹ and they who had most to lose made the greatest haste.

If, now, we touch on the domain of thought, here also we find delusion. How many researches, how much groping, since the day when the first philosopher

¹ "Ruere in servitium."—(Tac., Ann I., VII.)

formed his system! What royal genius was evinced by the Greek mind, now rising with Plato to the regions of the ideal—now examining with Aristotle, by a minute analysis, the inmost depths of reality! Apart from negative conclusions, and from moral influence, what has been the result of these grand systems? The philosophers mentioned in our text teach us but too truly; they belonged to the sects of the Epicureans and the Stoics. The doctrine of the former was comprised in this word, *to enjoy*. That of the latter had for its formula, *to die*; for its last resource was suicide. These were both doctrines of despair. They frankly abandoned all high and profound speculations; declaring that they lead to nothing, and comparing them to puerile sports.¹ To the dejected discouraged spirits of this period, the Epicurean offered but one consolation: “Turn away thine eyes from heaven,” he said to man—“heaven is an immense void; seek oblivion in enjoyment—crown thy brow with roses, and make thy life a long festival.” Epicureanism is despair smiling; which is despair in its most frightful form, for nothing is more bitter than this forced smile. “Leave politics, art, speculation,” it says, “and enjoy.”²

The soul, finding only such comfort as this, next turns to the Stoic. His austere appearance, his sad and serious air, inspire confidence. Alas! far from curing despair, he declares it to be without remedy, and says to man, “Thou hast nothing else to expect, for the fates guide us.”³ Die in thy suffering; only try to die erect. If the suffering be too great, seek to

¹ Seneca, Letter, 107.

² Plutarch, against Colopheneus, c. XXXIII.

³ “Fata nos ducunt.”—(Seneca, *De providentia*.)

escape from it by destruction ; thou mayest even look to wine for oblivion.¹ If it return inveterately, overwhelmingly, then die.”² Suicide is thus the last resource of Stoicism. Such is the result of human philosophy ; to die either of material enjoyment or of suffering ! Nothing now remains for philosophy but to proclaim its own decease ; and this it has not failed to do, by professing universal scepticism, which is equivalent to the suicide of philosophy, in these melancholy words of Cicero’s : “The philosophers of the Academy affirm nothing ; they despair of arriving at any certain knowledge.”³ They despair ! you hear it—ancient philosophy abdicates in despair.

These repeated delusions, however, are of little matter, if man has not been deceived in his endeavours to find his God. If this hope has not failed him, he may take consolation for all his other failures ! But, as you know already, the worst delusion of this period is that which concerned religion. Freedom is lost, philosophy vanishes, above all, the gods perish. They are still upon their altars, the ordinary sacrifices are offered, the sacred circlets, the victims, the pomp, the auguries, all the external apparatus of worship continues ; but all is dead. Faith, which is the soul of religion, has withdrawn from paganism ; and soon, like a lifeless body, it will return, we say not to the dust, but to the mire from which it was taken. These gods, so revered in the past, are now scoffed at and ridiculed in the most insulting manner. Some, like Lucretius, deny their existence ; others, like Euhemerus, transform them into agricultural symbols ;

¹ *De tranquillitate animi*, XV.—“Usque ad ebrietatem veniendum.”

² Seneca, letter 70.

³ “Desperata cognitione certi.”—(Cicero, *De bonis*, II., 14.)

or, like Plutarch, subtilize them into a sort of vague pantheism. The one thing certain, is, that they are believed in no longer, save by a few who, unable to find peace from them, fall into the agonies of a superstition, which becomes a real insanity. A pagan author has depicted for us the melancholy condition of such: "Leave," say they, "leave the unfortunate, the impious, the cursed one, hated of all the gods, to endure his punishment. The superstitious man seats himself in the dust—or, clothed in sackcloth, rolls on the ground. Near the altars he feels only terror. The spectres of his imagination pursue him night and day. His reason dreams unceasingly, and his fears are ever awake."¹

The decline of religion shews itself also externally. The oracles are dumb. A heathen author declares that the communication with the gods is like a river dried up in the sand. Silence and solitude reign at Delphos.² The divinities expire. But there is one god especially, which, like Vulcan in the fable, falls miserably from Olympus, where he had been thoughtlessly placed. This is man—man so poetically worshipped by Greece. Never, certainly, were greater efforts made for his apotheosis, but never did it prove a more ignoble comedy. The human divinity of Saint Paul's time was personated by the Roman emperor. Nero is the god to-day, as Claudius or Caligula was yesterday, as Commodus or Domitian will be to-morrow. With a nod he governs sea and land, and orders peace or war.³ He has the right to say: All is lawful to me towards all.⁴ And this human deity, who has temples and

¹ Plutarch, *De Superstitione*.

² Plutarch, *De Oraculis*, V.

³ Pliny the Younger, *Panegyric on Trajan*.

⁴ Suetonius, *Caligula*.

altars, is in most cases a monster—sometimes a fool—who, plunged in shameful debauchery, refreshes himself in the intervals of his licentiousness with pillage and murder. Grecian polytheism found its consummation in the bald and squinting Caligula or the obese Vitellius. What a fall! We can understand that the known divinity being some unworthy Cæsar, men should sigh after the unknown God!

But it was not only in the person of the emperor that humanity was debased. The corruption was general and extreme, such as it would be a crime to delineate. It is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret, says Saint Paul. Remember the admirable first chapter in the Epistle to the Romans, where the apostle sums up the dreadful, though sober, description he had been giving of the people of his day in these powerful words: “God gave them up unto vile affections.” When we read the authors of this age, we rise from their writings with our minds disturbed, and as it were polluted, by contact with wickedness so extreme. The cynical exclamation, “Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die,” resounds from end to end of the empire—it passes from one hall of festivity to another, like an ill-omened chorus. We die—ah well! let this day that shall have no morrow be a day of unlimited debauchery, of splendid voluptuousness. We seem to see the crew of a vessel about to sink, consuming in one last revel what was meant to sustain them on a long voyage. Nor is corruption the privilege of a class. We have the most positive evidence that it affected women as well as men, the lower orders with the higher, the slave with his master. Licentiousness and cruelty, those two inseparable sisters, went hand in hand. The

emperor put the senator to torture, the senator defrauded the wealthy man, the wealthy man punished the slave, the whole of humanity was to the sovereign like a vile herd, and this herd again divided itself into two parts—on the one side masters, on the other slaves. Oppression was found on every step of the social ladder. Everywhere division, hatred, infamy. We were right then in saying: It was a time of despair. And yet the word despair indicates too much of moral energy. Man was satiated, wearied with everything. There is a profound saying of a contemporary writer's which describes this miserable period: "That which troubles us," says Seneca, "is not the tempest but the sickness."¹ The sickness! that is to say the secret, incurable, universal ennui of humanity set free from all its illusions. It suffers from this moral sickness without power to cure itself, and yet wishing to obtain a cure at any price. Hence that unheard of luxury, those festivals costing millions of money, those barbarous entertainments. The Roman people require that rivers of blood should flow in their circus, because they are a weary people. The more weary they become, the more cruel are their amusements. Just as the dose of opium has to be increased in the case of an obstinate malady, so does this moral sickness seek for ever increasing excitement in its sanguinary pleasures. When you see the sovereign people inundating the circus with its terrible waves, rejoicing in carnage, and never satisfied unless the combat of the gladiators end in a real battle, forget not this saying of Seneca's: "We suffer not from the tempest, but from the sickness;" and at the sight of those hateful spectacles or those unbridled debaucheries, say to your-

¹ "Non tempestate sed nausea vexor."—(*De tranquillitate animi*, c. 1.)

selves that nothing less would suffice to make humanity forget that all its efforts and its gropings had resulted in nothing. Delusion, universal delusion!

Delusion, certainly, but aspiration also, the trembling of a mysterious expectation! This expectation is only blessed and fruitful in some cases, but it exists universally. We have proof of this even in our text. Scarcely had Paul arrived at Athens,—scarcely had the people learned that he taught a new doctrine, than they crowded around him, listened to him with eagerness, and pressed him with questions. The Athenians manifested the same dispositions as did the Jews in the time of John the Baptist, when, at the beginning of his ministry, they sent messengers to him to ask: “Art thou He that should come?” But we have still surer indications of this universal aspiration. The historians of the time are unanimous in imputing to their contemporaries a strange readiness to accept what they call foreign superstitions. “They find entrance more and more,” we read in Tacitus.¹ The people thus shewed that their religion appeared to them insufficient, and that they had a vague hope of discovering one that should be better. But it was towards the East especially that all eyes were turned. Suetonius tells us that the belief prevailed that the dominion of the world was to belong to a man springing from Judea.²

The aspiration was expressed in various ways in the different classes of society. Among the people it took a gross form, shewing itself in the belief in magic, which was everywhere diffused. The magician had an immense influence over the lower classes, as we see strikingly exemplified in the Acts of the

¹ “Externæ superstitiones valescunt.”—*Annals*, XI., c. 15.

² Suetonius, *Vespasian*, IV.

Apostles. We find a whole people at Samaria fascinated by the arts of Simon the magician, and we learn from history that this fact represents a general tendency. Why were these impostors followed with so much eagerness? It was from the same motive which impelled the inhabitants of Jerusalem to go to the desert after the false Messiahs with whom this period abounded; it was in the hope of finding a deliverer. They said of Simon Magus: "This man is the great power of God."¹ They saw in him a manifestation of divine power; they hoped to find in him a Saviour. False deliverers, false saviours, only succeed when the true one is expected and desired. Among serious men the aspiration after salvation was otherwise expressed. They seem at times to have caught a glimpse of the Christian ideal. Words escape them which sound like an echo of the Gospel. They speak of women and of slaves² in a manner well-nigh Christian, but again within a few lines they contradict themselves. Yet that which Christianity was to bring to the world, was foreseen and most certainly was desired by them. They also express very forcibly the want of a new consolation. "Give me," wrote Pliny the younger to one of his friends in a time of sorrow,—“give me new and strong consolations, such as I have never heard or read of yet. All that I have read and heard returns to my memory, but my grief is too great!”³ Does he not speak in the name of universal humanity? "My sufferings are beyond any comfort of which I know." It is the cry of a heart undeceived. "Give me new consolations!" It is the eloquent expression of a

¹ Acts viii. 10.

² See the works of Pliny the younger, and of Seneca.

³ Pliny, *Epistle* I., cap. xii.—“*Aliqua magna, nova solatia.*”

fervent aspiration after the Comforter. These words are, as it were, the hymn raised by the pagan world in chorus to the unknown God. Listen, finally, to the account given by a man of that day who became at last an earnest Christian, but who, before his conversion, represented his times in many different ways. The fictitious hero of the *Clementines*, giving forth in this case a faithful echo of truth, describes to us in the following terms the commencement of his life;—"From my earliest youth," he says, "I was exercised with doubts. They pursued me everywhere with their torments, and when I wished to be free from them they only increased. I knew well that there was a celestial guide, who could conduct me to the truth, and I sought Him from place to place. Exercised by these thoughts from my youth, I went through the schools of the philosophers, but in vain. I was tossed about from one doctrine to another, more miserable than ever, as if I were the sport of a whirlwind of contrary ideas, and I sighed from the depths of my soul."¹ This sigh, my brethren, is it not the whole work of preparation? Blends it not in a sense with the expectant yearnings of Simeon and of Anna the prophetess as with the prayer of Mary? Has not the desire of salvation reached its highest point? Has it not risen to God from the altar of the unknown deity like the sweet incense of prayer? Are we not warranted in saying of the heathen world what we said of the chosen people: "The times are fulfilled?"

It was just because Paul was proclaiming, not the Jewish Messiah only, but also the desire of all nations, that, "ignorant of the art of speaking well, with the

¹ *Recognitiones*, c. i. to vi.

rude language which bespeaks a stranger, he could go boldly into polished Greece, the mother of philosophers and orators, and in spite of the world's opposition, found more churches in that country than Plato gained disciples by eloquence that has been thought divine."¹ The experience of the nothingness of man is now complete. He has no more to hope for on earth. The divine object is accomplished. He has groped long enough, to use the metaphor of our text, to understand that he can discover nothing which can in itself satisfy him. He has become like that poor blind man of whom the evangelist Luke tells us, who sat at the gate of Jericho, asking alms of the passers by! Yes, pagan humanity in its misery and despair begs of the philosopher to ascertain if he has a doctrine that can comfort; of the Egyptian priest, also, and the wise man of the East, to know if their faith is less empty than the religion of the Greeks; of the magician even, to see if his sorcery may not contain virtue from God. But neither one nor another can give him aught that shall be salutary or efficacious. Poor blind one, take comfort notwithstanding! Thou shalt not have long to grope in the night. Already, like Bartimeus, thou hast heard a faint sound of the coming Deliverer, and hast begun to cry after him. Already thou sayest from the depths of thy heart: Have pity on me, and heal me! Fear not, He is near. Has not St. Paul declared that God is not far from us? He comes, He has come already. The unknown God is unveiling Himself, and at the first touch of His merciful hand light shall burst on thy darkened eyeballs! Thy cry has been heard; the times of preparation are

¹ Bossuet, *Panegyric on St Paul.*

completed. The Saviour is born to us, and to Him, my brethren, will we now conduct you. We will keep you no longer on the threshold of the Gospel history, but will enter within it in our next discourse. We will seek our Saviour in the eternal glory of the Father, that we may the better measure the extent of His abasement. This is to say, in other words, that His divinity and His humanity will first engage our attention. Afterwards, knowing what His nature is, we shall inquire what He came to do upon earth, what was His plan, what means He put in operation, in what sentiments His plan is realized. Thus, following Him from the manger to the cross, and from the cross to the garden, where He appeared in risen form to Mary Magdalene, we shall seek to unfold before you the picture of His ministry, up to the day when He ascended to heaven, from whence He will come again in like manner, and does in fact continually come by the Holy Spirit, which unites us to Him by faith.

There is one analogy which I cannot forbear to point out at the end of this discourse, but which you have no doubt already perceived. What a striking resemblance is there between our own epoch and that which we have been describing! Does it not seem that our age also is destined to demonstrate the impotence of man to accomplish anything good or useful apart from God? In spite of the Gospel revelation, amid the full light of Christianity, humanity as a whole has once more undertaken to walk alone, refusing the help of Christ, and condemning itself thus to miserable groping. And so, by one attempt after another, it has come into a state like that of the heathen world, as much so, at least, as is possible for a society that has within it the leaven of the Gospel, or

rather the salt of truth, which alone preserves it from absolute dissolution. Let us speak for example of French society. Is it not true that this age is a hard one for France,—an age of many delusions intertwined one with another? In the domain of social life as in that of philosophy, has there not been a breaking up of all the hopes which brightened the close of the last century—hopes founded on man, and consequently frail and unsubstantial? In the sphere of religious life has not scepticism made frightful advances? The superstition which Plutarch described, the dread of a soul that has not found a God who will pardon, has not this appeared once more? And on the other hand, does not scoffing infidelity boast thousands of organs? Above all, is not torpor and universal weariness gradually gaining ground? And might not the men of our generation repeat the melancholy words: That which makes us suffer is not so much the tempest as the sickness? Yes, there is a general satiety. Can we find men in our day who have impulse to act, enthusiasm, faith in anything? Where are they? If they do indeed exist, where are they hidden that we see them so little? There is not now even a genuine youthfulness with any illusions or generous eagerness. Gold circulates abundantly. Industry does wonders, I allow; but what avail the instruments of activity if the moral springs relax, if materialism render all fruitful work impossible? Disappointment, disappointment, this is the character of our age also. It is at the same time, however, its greatness, for disappointment leads to aspiration. The altar to the true God will be constructed once more from the remains of every other. And this time it will not be dedicated to a God unknown, but to a God who has been forgotten.

This altar, we feel assured, is already in building. Yes, there is in men's hearts a sigh that materialism cannot still. An immense void is felt, which only a God can fill up,—a sadness which this world cannot remove. All that we ask of you, O ye by whom all this is experienced, is that you take not comfort too soon, that you delude not your sacred thirst for truth and salvation! Let not the history of the past be without profit! Accept not consolations that are not real! Repeat the profound saying of the heathen: I must have new, strong, earnest consolations! If, for example, you are told: Forget your sadness, take your place at our festivities, and share our licentiousness,—recognize at once the epicurean of paganism, and reply: Thou art no new comforter—thou didst ruin all who believed in thee eighteen centuries ago—begone from me! If you are told: Trust only to thy reason, deny all revelation, and lift a bold front towards heaven—here is the proud philosophy of former days—say to it in reply: Thou art no new comforter, thou reservest suicide beyond a doubt for the last of thy counsels—begone! If you are told: Rejoice in the progress of civilization, in the victories of man over nature, and anticipate others still greater to be won by a reorganized society—answer: The Roman roads, as marvellous for that day as our railroads for our own, only carried the weariness of man more rapidly from one extremity of the empire to the other. The remedy for my woe is not to be found in these outward things, I need something new. If you are told: Keep to the faith of your ancestors without examining it, follow the practices of their worship without verifying them, slumber on the pillow where they found repose—then reply: The trial of external religions and traditional

beliefs has been made. We know what they proved to be worth in evil days. Real, earnest consolation is not to be found in multiplied ceremonies or in rigid external authority. Where is it, then, for I need it sorely! May it reach you on the day when you shall utter this cry of distress! on the day when, weary with groping, you shall become like the blind man of Jericho! Your God is not far off! He is there, He is waiting for you! Fear not that He will pass on without hearing you! Your hopes shall no more be frustrated than were those of your ancestors;—He has words as mighty as He had of old! When once He has spoken you will grope no more, but be changed from desponding seekers into joyful believers! But all this is on condition that you rest not in the carnal contentment of materialism, but recognize in the trials, both general and individual, with which this age abounds, a merciful appointment of God, who will not cease to smite you till He has wounded your heart like that of Jacob, in order that He may bless you! Blessed, truly blessed, are they that weep and groan, they shall be comforted; between them and the Comforter there stands no obstacle that cannot be surmounted.

It were too much to say no obstacle at all. Between poor souls and Christ, Christians too often stand. We read in the narrative of the cure of blind Bartimeus that the disciples interposed for a moment between him and the Saviour. And is not this the part which the believers of our day too often act? There are some who, erroneously regarding themselves as the sole representatives of Christianity, believe it their mission to be the medium between the poor blind ones of their day and the divine Physician. They tell them to go not to Him but to themselves. But they are

not Christ! They have neither His mercy nor His power; they are severe and narrow-minded, and substitute for truths fables that seem gathered from the relics of paganism. What a part to act! to come between the sinner and Christ, and hide Him by appearing in His place! What a responsibility! That there are still so many poor gropers we must attribute in great part to these usurpers of the rights of God, who only possess His Word to conceal it! Yes, many sighs and aspirations are fruitless, because the priest comes between souls and Christ, presenting himself as the incarnation of Christianity. We can easily understand how a religion so represented should prove but little attractive.

But, in conclusion, brethren, let us think of ourselves as evangelical Christians! We also, we have discouraged many proselytes, by shewing them a semi-Christianity without life or warmth! The gospel is the same now as it was eighteen centuries ago, if only we caused it to be seen as well as read! Would you know the secret of Paul's power in preaching? It consisted not simply in the doctrine which he proclaimed, but also in the spirit in which he proclaimed it! We have the doctrine, although not entire, but often much contracted and impoverished; the discourse of Paul at Athens goes beyond our theological systems on all sides. But still, in essential points, we have the doctrine of salvation. Have we also the spirit which animated Paul? have we that fervent charity that consumed his heart? Luke shews him to us at Athens sorrowfully traversing the city, and shuddering at the sight of the idolatrous altars with which it abounded. Paul contemplated the pagan city with feelings such as those that caused Jesus Christ to weep

over Jerusalem. Look into his heart sacredly stirred within him, and you will comprehend how his words could found, as Bossuet says, more churches than Plato could make disciples! That deep emotion, that love, that grief—these are wanting in us; and when we shall come to traverse the streets of our great city with a heart stirred as was Paul's at Athens, then shall we also do a great work to the glory of Christ, and the altar to the unknown God shall no longer be raised in vain in those souls that are waiting only to behold true Christians before acknowledging and adoring the Saviour of the world. O my God! in these days so solemn and so troubled, let it not be said that there were disciples of Christ, but that they stood as obstacles between Him and the diseased society that was needing Him! Nay, Lord, but let our single effort be to lead souls to Him who hath the words of eternal life! Let nothing in our works or words keep them away from Christ! but let us be ever pure from our brothers' blood!

V.

THE NATURE OF JESUS CHRIST.

THE GOD-MAN.

“The Word was made flesh.”—JOHN i. 14.

THE desire of the Saviour had attained its full maturity in that period of universal decline of which we have attempted to give a rapid outline. Like a fire smouldering beneath the ruins of an edifice which it has devoured, this desire burned on under the ruins of Paganism and of Judaism, and a little flame might even be seen mounting to heaven, victorious over the whole ancient world which it had consumed. To describe in few words the dispositions of such earnest spirits as belonged to this memorable epoch, we cannot do better than borrow the noble and poetic language of Origen. He sees in the bride of the Song of songs waiting for her husband, a type of the human soul expecting her Saviour. She was betrothed to Him by the promise of Eden, she knows that He is coming, and at this solemn moment she calls for Him with inexpressible ardour. Origen teaches us to hear her voice first in Judaism and then in Paganism. “The Church,” he says, “by which I mean the community of saints, wishes for her union with Christ,

and thus expresses her desire: "I have been laden with gifts, I have received abundantly the pledges of my divine espousals. During the time of my betrothal to the Son of the King of heaven, to the Sovereign of all creation, the angels brought me the law as a gift from my Lord. The prophets, filled with the Holy Spirit, have constantly quickened my love, and animated my holy desires,¹ by speaking of His coming, of His virtues innumerable, and His generous gifts. They have depicted for me His noble beauty and His tender mercy, till I can bear no longer the yearnings of my love.² Already is the actual economy drawing to a close. But as yet I only see His messengers ascending and descending upon the shining ladder. To Thee I turn, Father of my Lord, and implore Thee to have pity on my love and to send Him to me, that He may no longer speak by His servants and His prophets, but may come Himself and let me hear His words and His teachings."

It was not, however, in Judaism only that the divine Spouse was called, but also, according to Origen, in the midst of Paganism itself. "The human soul," he says,³ "even among the heathen, has a deep desire to unite herself with the Word. She has received the earnest of the divine espousals. Just as the law and the prophecies were the pledges of the future to Israel, so the law of conscience, reason, and free will, were the gifts of betrothal to the human soul outside of Judaism. No doctrine of philosophy satisfied her desire and her love.⁴ She asks the illu-

¹ "At desiderium ejus succenderint."

² "Ad amorem ejus intolerabiliter inflammaretur."—(Origen, *In Cantic. cantic.*, Lib. I.)

³ Idem.

⁴ "Plena atque perfecta desiderii sui amoris expletio."

mination and the visitation of the Word. Neither men nor angels content her! She seeks the divine embrace of the Word!"¹

If such, then, are the dispositions of humanity, is it not evident that the celestial Bridegroom is about to descend from heaven? This desire,—who has inspired, nourished, and developed it, if not the God to whom the broken heart of man addresses itself? He has pursued no other end during many ages but the maturing of this desire! And now that the great design is realized, shall the heavens close and be deaf to the universal prayer? No, no, anything is possible but refusal! I appeal to the numerous proofs of divine love, to its patient and persevering working during the time of preparation. The coming of the Saviour shall not be delayed for an instant. Already does the hymn of peace resound on the plains of Bethlehem. He is coming, He is coming, says that hymn; or rather, He has come already! We may join with the shepherds and the magi, the first-fruits of Christian humanity, the former representing the chosen people and the latter the nations (the *Gentiles*); we also may offer to the Saviour our myrrh, our incense; above all, the treasures of our hearts! We may adore Him in the manger! But to worship Him in His humiliation we must first recognize His divinity through His humanity; and on this important subject I now propose to you to meditate, as suggested by the words of my text: "The Word was made flesh."

There are, no doubt, in this assembly some who refuse to believe in the perfect divinity of Christ, and others who doubt His perfect humanity. In all times has this twofold tendency been manifested. Those

¹ "Ipsius oscula Verbi Dei."

who deny or qualify the perfect divinity of Christ, prolong, or rather revive Paganism ; for that has ever sought to humanize the divine. Those who deny or qualify His perfect humanity, prolong or revive Judaism, which separated the divine from the human, and raised between earth and heaven the high and terrible barrier of Sinai. Christianity is the final religion, just because it reconciles the divine and the human without changing either the one or the other. It is the religion of the *God-man*. To deny in Jesus Christ either the God or the man is to take from Christianity the very reason of its existence. It is, in fact, to suppress it altogether ; for we might well in that case be asked, “Of what use is a new religion which is nothing more than a pale reflection of an ancient one ? It needed not that heaven and earth should be shaken, or told to keep silence, that they might hear that which they already knew.” Here, then, is the very essence of the Gospel ; and as the Gospel is the good news of salvation, here is the indispensable condition of this salvation. May God give me to convince those who doubt, and to confirm those who believe in the perfect divinity and the perfect humanity of their Saviour ! We are enjoying day by day the results of this great doctrine, but we do not contemplate it in itself as we should. The abundant and precious fruits which it brings to us seem sometimes even to conceal from us the tree on which they grow. And yet there is a rich edification to be found in these sublime truths. Like high mountains they contain the freshest springs. May we now have a proof of this fact in our meditation on our text, which is at once so concise and so profound ! This great subject—the nature of Jesus Christ—is the burning bush of the

new covenant. May it inspire us with that holy reverence which filled the man of the law in the wilderness, and with that filial confidence which belongs to the men of grace!

A child is born in a small town of a small country. This child is called Jesus, and the name announces all that He comes to do here below. Whoever you may be, you will at least admit in a certain measure that He has brought a great deliverance to the world. But what ideas do you entertain of His person? What is He in your eyes? To resolve the great question of the nature of Jesus Christ, I shall first pass in review the different solutions that have been given by those who reject the Gospel; and to refute these solutions I shall appeal rather to themselves than to revelation. It suffices to bring such notions into contact with the heart of man, with his mysterious and infinite desire of salvation, and they will be consumed by his unsatisfied longings as straw by the fire!

What, then, has been told you concerning Christ? Perhaps that He never really existed, but is only a mythical and fabulous personage like Linus or Orpheus; that the Gospel is a brilliant tissue of legends drawn from popular superstitions; that Christ is in fact only the symbol of our own divinity—of that union of man with God which ought to be realized in each one of us through the development of reason! Have you heard such doctrines as these? Nothing is more possible; for the schools of scepticism have scattered their dust through the air which we breathe, and the impiety of false sages pervades our streets. I shall not refute this absurd opinion by dwelling on the imposing mass of historical testimony which guarantees the reality of the Gospel facts. I shall not repeat the

well-known quotations from Jewish and Pagan authors, who confirm even by their enmity the truth of the sacred narrative. I shall not speak of the blood of apostles shed for what is called a myth; a fact which, if the notions of modern rationalism were true, would be as inexplicable on the part of the executioners as on that of the victims. Legends and dreams inspire neither so much fury nor so much devotion. I content myself with appealing to the human soul. Was it to discover a myth, a beautiful legend, a well-invented fable, that thou hast suffered and groaned so long, that thou hast searched under all skies and in all times? What! at the price of such grief and weariness thou hast pursued a poetic expression of a truth already possessed! If man, by his own reason, be the true Christ, why has he desired another? What meaning is there in the history of religions? What sense in the anxiety and agitation of our hearts? It seems to us that to state these questions is to answer them.

But again, what has been told you of Christ? Perhaps you have been assured that He was a great social reformer, and that the Gospel is the plan of a new society? This idea has lingered too long in our poor world to be unknown to you. I will not remind you of the profoundly spiritual character of the Gospel, or of the Master's words so often repeated, by which He raised the eye of man from earth to heaven: "My kingdom is not of this world. Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all other things shall be added unto you. Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life"—words which trace all external reform to inward moral renovation. Here,

also, I appeal to the desire of your own hearts. Think you that this would be fully satisfied by social reformation? To state the case in the best way:—Suppose that the earth no longer grudged to any their daily bread, but was covered with harvests a thousandfold more abundant than at present; that the paths of the year dropped plenty upon all (and would to God it were so! we are only here combating materialism). Suppose that there were no more starving beggars at the door of the rich, but that, seated in his turn at a magnificent table, and clothed in purple and fine linen, the poor man—no longer poor—exemplified in a perfectly equalized society the extent of social progress. Suppose that this were the sole work of Christ, and that it had fully succeeded. Think you that here all aspiration would cease, that every desire would be extinguished within you? Ah! you have a better opinion of human nature! You despise it not so much as to believe this! You know very well that it would still break forth from the present time as from a prison,—from the earth as from a place of exile,—because it lives not upon bread alone, but, above all, upon truth! You know that on the very morrow of the fortunate day we have depicted, the void would be but the greater in the heart of the poor man now grown rich, because an infinite void—the void caused by a lost God, only makes itself mournfully appreciated by that which has been thrown in to fill it up. No, no; it is not for this only that all creatures have sighed during six thousand years. Each of these immortal souls feels in its inmost depths that the whole world—even a world transformed after the fairest dreams of social reformers—would avail it not; and if the Christ of eighteen centuries ago were only

a reformer for time and for earth, ah well! it would seek another, it would know that the true Deliverer must yet be to come!

You may have been told, once more, that Jesus of Nazareth was a sage, a philosopher, the Socrates of Jerusalem! I shall not speak of the miraculous and mysterious character of His life and of His doctrine, which transports us from the domain of theory into that of sovereign reality. I appeal once again to the desire of your hearts. Is it a sage, a philosopher that you need? But had not the ancient world more of such than it required! It had the purest, the greatest, the most admirable possible, and still it could not rest in their schools. It demanded from the East something new and powerful, and can you believe that if the East had provided one more philosopher with some higher moral notions than others had possessed, the world would have been satisfied? What! a new reasoner, a man of suppositions and hypotheses, presenting himself with a system derived from former ones! Should this be the Saviour, the Deliverer? But have you not understood that it is certainty, an immediate and absolute certainty, that should be like a sight of the invisible, for which man yearns? He has heard enough of reasoners, rhetoricians, philosophers. He has agitated ideas, started questions, tried doctrines long enough. The old world,—and we all belong to it in this respect, cannot bear the weariness of all this! It hungers for belief, for God, and you offer it the empty food with which it is already deeply disgusted. It thirsts for consolation, and you lead it to the damaged and broken cistern of human wisdom. Give it the bread and the water which it demands. Give to it its God, its living God. If you do not this, if

God be not brought to the world by your Christ, ah, well! it must seek for another.

This other Christ, then, shall He be a prophet, the divinest of prophets, as has, perhaps, been suggested to you? Prophets will not avail, and the proof of this is, that the greatest of them have been those who have most ardently desired the Saviour. He who, according to Christ himself, was at once the last and the first of the prophets, John the Baptist, did he not declare that he was not worthy to unloose the latchet of His shoes? A prophet! but he would be a man, one of ourselves, purified it might be, and chosen to be the organ of the Spirit; sanctified by a burning coal, such as touched the lips of Isaiah; elevated to the contemplation of things ineffable; but one of ourselves still; infected with the sore disease of sin, condemned like all the rest; and it is not a sharer in the sickness that should be the physician. No, you need more than a prophet; and this is why, after Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Daniel, the Jews still looked for Him that should come!

Or shall it be an angel—the brightest, the nearest to the throne of God? I will not remind you of those words of a sacred writer's: "To which of the angels said He at any time, Sit on my right hand?"¹ I will only refer to Origen's true and beautiful expression of the desire of our hearts, when he represents the human soul as saying: "I have hitherto only seen thine angels descending and ascending the shining ladder! Have pity on my love, O Father! Let my Lord speak to me no longer through His servants, but come Himself—speak to me Himself!" If we experience so profound a need of seeing the Son of God without any finite medium,—

¹ Heb i. 13.

seeing and hearing Him in person, what can we have to do with any creature? It is the eternal Word that we want. If an angel could have been the Christ, Mary would have seen Him in Gabriel; but the angel, like Mary herself, spoke of the promised Saviour who had not yet come. The angels could celebrate His birth, but not one of them could have filled His place. Humanity knew the servants, and aspired to possess the Master.

Thus has it sufficed for us to confront these false ideas of the Saviour with the secret and burning desire of our hearts to recognize their inadequacy. But let us pass from these notions, which are somewhat vague, to the desire of salvation, such as we have analyzed it. We shall very soon be convinced that man asked nothing less than what God has given;—that is to say, a Saviour uniting in Himself humanity and divinity. I fear not to take this ground, for I find a wonderful harmony between man's sacred desire and the positive prophecies that were designed to make it both pure and fruitful. When the true cry of the soul has risen to heaven, that cry has been for a God-man. Whenever the soul has spoken freely and sincerely, without being bound or chilled by a captious philosophy, it has sought for an incarnate Redeemer. This wish has, indeed, been too often wrapped around with gross and impure myths, but it proves irrefragably that the incarnation alone could respond to man's desire, and that violence is done as well to human nature as to revelation, by denying this great miracle.

What, in fact, have we all along discovered, brethren, in the desire of salvation? Two well-defined sentiments—the sorrow of condemnation and the hope of recovery. This hope is essentially the hope of

finding God—of possessing Him once more. It is for Him alone that man has sought from one religion to another. And observe well that it is not the inert and isolated God of philosophy, lost in the solitudes of heaven like an eastern king in the depths of his palace. No ; man sighs for a living God—a God that shall unite Himself with his whole being. He has miserably degraded the notion of a divinity by breaking it into fragments, and dragging it, debased and mutilated, in the dust of the material world, to which in a sense he has given these fragments. The tree, the flower, the vast ocean, the fresh stream, the sun, the breeze, the golden corn,—all beings, all elements have been made divine, and there was not an action of life over which a deity did not preside. Say that these are odious superstitions, and we agree with you, but confess, also, that they envelop, while, alas ! profaning it, a true sentiment. “I must have a God at hand, a God who speaks to me, who guides me.” This is what man has never ceased to repeat by all the religions that he has invented. “Make us gods which shall go before us,”¹ said the Israelites to Aaron. This instinctive demand is the motto of all the paganisms of the ancient world. Materialistic on one side, it is true on the other. Man cannot do without a real God, and he will only be able to believe in his own recovery when he shall have seen a God walk before him on his mournful way. He has always been seeking, while without the religion of the true God, to get near to the Divinity, to join himself to Him, to fasten again the severed links that had united him with God, to possess Him again in reality. We have the strongest proofs that it was not enough for

¹ Exod. xxxii. 1.

man to worship a God in the distant heavens, but that he keenly desired that heaven should come near—should stoop to earth. Even the saints of the old dispensation, the worshippers of the true and holy God were not satisfied with their condition. They needed something more than they possessed, as is indicated by their so constantly looking forwards; and by the lips of one of their number they cried, “As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God.”¹ Try, then, to satisfy a heart which has thus aspired, with a Saviour that shall be less than God!

We have been considering the incarnation so far, especially on its divine side; but its human side, the perfect humanity of the Redeemer, His humanity humbled, suffering, crucified, is no less the object of our desires. The hope is preceded by the sorrow of condemnation. This sorrow withers the heart of man, it covers his life with the veil of the divine anger. The weight of his guilt crushes him. His pride may be caressed and flattered, but he still feels that he belongs to a fallen and accursed race. It is in vain that he tastes pleasure; the gnawing worm, the worm that never dies, is in the fruit. It is in vain that he throws himself into external activity; that he becomes an orator or a warrior; that he robes himself with glory; he escapes not thus from the dark fear of death, or from the immense weariness of life! He knows that for him the present is desolate, and the future alarming; for he depends on an offended and wrathful God. Oh! how he longs to appease Him! He takes the finest produce of his fields, and lays it on the

¹ Psalm xlii. 1, 2.

altar ; but he returns troubled as before. He takes what is more precious, the first-born of his flocks—he is lavish of sacrifices—he offers up whole hecatombs ; but his God is not satisfied ! There must be a human sacrifice ; for the entire race feels itself guilty before God. The privations to which man exposes himself in order to offer sacrifices, are wholly unavailing ! Well, then, he will hesitate no longer. Oh ! spectacle of horror ! he will devote his child, his brother ; he will slay him without pity, if only his God may be appeased. But it avails nothing, for the victim was not pure ! The lamb and the sheep without spot were pure indeed ; but they were not human. The human victim was not pure. A sacrifice must be found that shall be at once pure and human ! And this, from altar to altar, has been sought in tears and blood from that heaven which remains still closed. Those who ignore the Saviour as a victim, and see in Him only the revealer of divine love, overlook these terrible manifestations of a conscience at once erring and peremptory, raving wildly in her burning, though misguided, thirst for redemption ! They have not stood before those bloody altars which would be set up again to-morrow, if the Lamb, that taketh away the sins of the world, should disappear from our sight ; and which do, in fact, exist in all places where that Lamb is unknown ! No doubt this desire, this need of the conscience, is at once purified and satisfied by the Gospel ; but no ingenious theory can root it out ; and we are warranted in saying, it is not only a God of glory, it is a God-man, it is a sacrifice, that lost humanity demands ; and until it has found this it will search on still. If christianity provide it not, it will seek farther. For many ages it has sighed after an incarnation—an incarnation in

order to a redeeming sacrifice, and it will be contented with nothing less !

This is also what had been promised to mankind. The desire was only the inward promise, as the promise was the divine sanction of the desire. I shall not repeat all the illustrations that I have given of the prophecies of the old dispensation. It will be sufficient to remark that Isaiah, who calls the Saviour, by anticipation, Wonderful, Counsellor, Son of the Most High, calls Him also the man of sorrows, the despised, the slain lamb ; ancient prophecy thus recognizing in His person the man and the God, the victim and the king. Was not the incarnation implied even in the first of the prophecies ! That seed of the woman which was to crush the serpent, was it not humanity fully assimilated by God, and the bruise inflicted by the serpent did not that most fitly represent the reality of an incarnation that should involve suffering and death ?

God and man, then, the Saviour must be, in the name of the promises of heaven, and the desires of earth. Was He both in fact ? In other words, has the Saviour come ? Such is the question which our text decides : “The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.”

We know that the heart of man asks no less—that God has promised no less. Let us next consider the accomplishment of this desire,—the fulfilment of this promise, as suggested by these words which comprise the whole of Christianity—“The Word was made flesh.” What is this but to say that before being made flesh it existed in God. The divinity of Jesus Christ is not simply then a virtue emanating from God, and coming to animate the body of a man, like a ray shot from the sun at a certain

moment. No, the Word existed before the incarnation as a personal being. It was, according to the expression of Saint John, with God from the beginning, and was God. Let us not here be charged with touching on the theology of the schools! The eternal divinity of the Word, the Son of God, is an indispensable condition of salvation. If it consisted only in a divine virtue, a divine influence, it would have in it nothing special or absolutely distinctive. We all receive more or less of divine influences. We might then speak of the divinity of Christ as of our own; merely acknowledging that the divine influence was more powerful on Him than on us! Those who deny the pre-existence, the eternity of the Word which was incarnate in Jesus Christ, deny also His divinity in the scriptural sense. To continue to assert the latter is to play with words—to avoid the indignation of the Christian conscience by an equivocation,—to be wanting in sincerity. The God whom we need is the God of heaven, for He it is whom we have lost. The incarnation has no other object than to reinstate us in communion with Him; and it does this only if the incarnate Word is also the eternal Word.

Nor is this all; not only is the reality of our salvation in question, but also the knowledge of the true God. "Whosoever hath not the Son, hath not the Father." The true God, the free, living, holy God, He it is whom Saint John described when he wrote in his first epistle: "God is love." A God who was not love, who did not love, would be a God dead—no God at all. Shut up in His omnipotence, as in a desert, He would be but the cold impalpable shadow of divinity. But how should God be from all eternity a God of love, if He had no object for His love? Will you

say that He was from all eternity able to multiply creatures? Take care! this is to make creatures essential to the Creator, to take away His freedom in creating, to suppose the creation His necessary complement, to connect God with the world as a slave with his chain, to open the abyss of pantheism! Where, then, will you find the perfect object of His eternal love, if not in Himself? Where, if not in that Word which is God, and yet is distinct from Him, since the apostle tells us that the Word was with God! The Son gives us the Father. Through Him we recognize and we adore eternal love; and seeing love grounded in the very being of God, we comprehend that it is the law of the universe. The Word was in the beginning the brightness, the express image of the divine glory; and above all the object of the divine love. The only Son, says John, was in the bosom of the Father, a touching and sublime expression, which shews us in eternity all that love has most sacred and most tender, and which alone enables us to measure the extent of the redeeming sacrifice. They who see the divinity of Christ only in His holiness, understand not the whole bearing of His sacrifice. They are touched when they see Him scourged, outraged, slain; but what would they feel if they said to themselves: It is from the bosom of the Father that He has descended even to the garden of Gethsemane, to the hall of judgment, to the cross! It is the only Son of the Father that is here trodden under foot! And it is the Father that has given Him up to ignominy for the rebellious race. Oh, love of the Son, love of the Father, profound abysses! we are not angels, and if they cannot see into these depths, how should we! We must be silent and adore. Word made flesh! we worship

Thee in the bosom of the Father, as Thou didst reign in eternity before a single creature existed! Thither must we penetrate to understand Thy humiliation and Thy death!

The Word that was made flesh was then eternal. Such is the first teaching of our text. It gives us also a second very precious lesson, by shewing us the living nature of God's revelations. A word is the revelation of our soul. The Word of God is equally His revelation. It is not with His word as with ours. Our soul manifests itself by words that pass away immediately after having vibrated in the air on which they struck. The Word of God is not dissipated when once uttered. A perfect revelation of the living and eternal God, it is living and eternal as Himself. It is not a simple form of speech—it is a personal being, an express image of the Father, the very brightness of His glory. Thus is each utterance of the living Word a work that has life like that Word itself. God has spoken in eternity, and His Word is the only Son of the Father, God like Himself. He spake in time, and creation was the echo of His Word. "All things were made by Him. God said, Let there be light, and there was light." He spake in revelation, and His Word was not simply a doctrine, but a magnificent reality; each of the syllables being a fact,—now the election of Israel, now the law, now prophecy as a grand whole, now stupendous miracles. At last the Word spake in redemption, and this was the greatest of events—it was the incarnation. "The Word was made flesh," says our text. It was poured entire into a human soul—it lived there, loved there, manifested itself in a man's life and death, and may be said to have dwelt among us. Thus, whether considered in

heaven or in earth, the Word of God is ever a living Word. This is what distinguishes it from the words of man, and gives it its sovereign power. It is not a system, even the most perfect of systems, but a living reality from age to age; it rather manifests than proves itself. A revelation, which is an incarnation, becomes palpable and evident to the most simple; and we may say with an apostle, "That which we have seen with our eyes, and our hands have handled, that declare we unto you." Humanity had need of such a revelation. It had the germ of the Word in its presentiments—it possessed it as a floating idea; but the incarnation alone could give it its salutary power. There was no need, first, to overthrow false doctrines,—this could easily be done by putting the true in their place; but rather to destroy the works of sin. A great work of God was then necessary. The power of darkness, present on the earth, must be vanquished. The presence of the power of love was therefore indispensable. The word of hell, a word of pride and rebellion, had taken shape in humanity—it was made flesh, it was incarnate day by day. The Word of heaven must also be incarnate. Our text, then, after having reminded us of the eternity of the Word, teaches us the method of its revelations—living revelations, therefore perfect and efficacious!

The apostle John does not enlarge on the fact of the incarnation. He contents himself with stating, without defining it, for indeed it eludes every attempt at definition, and contains an inscrutable mystery. The Gospel reveals this to us; it tells us how, by His miraculous birth, Jesus Christ was exempted from the original stain. It constantly declares that He is the Son of man, and the Son of God. But it goes no

farther. Why has not its wise reserve been more often imitated? With how many difficulties has not the theology of men invested this great doctrine? It has sought, in some way, to measure by line the spheres of the divinity and the humanity in Christ; to say with precision where the divine or the human begins or ends. And the result of these attempts to circumscribe the human and divine natures within exact limits, has been to freeze up piety, and to take from the person of Christ its living unity. This dividing of His being has always ended in a complete duality. Thus, in the writings of some of the Fathers, the divinity of Christ is so separated from His humanity, that the former is represented as present at the passion, an unmoved spectator. There is something in these theological subtleties cold, far-fetched, false, such as the great apostolic era never knew. We will content ourselves with what was then found sufficient. "God," says Saint Paul again, "was manifest in the flesh;" the fulness of the Godhead dwelt bodily in Christ. We conclude from these words that the divine and human natures profoundly penetrate each other in the Redeemer. We should add, that the Deity, in uniting Himself to condemned humanity, humbled Himself, and took upon Him the form of a servant. This humiliation was free and voluntary, and could not therefore injure the dignity of the divine nature.

Let us, at the same time, beware of attenuating the humanity of Christ. It is no less necessary to our salvation than His divinity. The Word incarnate was in reality the second Adam; desired, called for, by the lost race. He represented it so completely, that in fighting for it against Satan He fought for Himself,

according to the beautiful image used by a Father : He was like a man defending his own hearth or country.¹ He was pre-eminently the man, while also one with the Father ; thus was He able to consummate on the cross His redeeming sacrifice, drawing the heart of man to God, and the heart of God to man. Let us content ourselves with recognizing the unity of the divine and the human, and leave untouched by our subtle distinctions a mystery so great and ineffable. For ourselves, we gladly accept that beautiful saying of Irenæus : “ The Word of God was made man, to accustom man to receive God, and God to dwell in man.”² We know not a sublimer paraphrase of the words of Saint John : “ The Word was made flesh.”

And now that we have considered the great doctrine of the divinity and the humanity of Christ in itself, and perceived that it alone responds to the revelations and promises of God, as well as to the need of our nature, let us rapidly trace some of the proofs which, in our view, establish this doctrine beyond dispute. In the first place, the very history of Jesus Christ, in its various phases, shews us divinity and humanity closely united in His person. Go back to His entrance into this world. See the little infant in swaddling clothes, lying in the manger, like all newborn children, weak, piteous as they, poorer than the poorest—here was the man ! But what rays of glory surround Him ! The armies of heaven sang His birth, even the stars celebrated it, and wise men were seen coming from the East to worship Him—here was the God ! He was subject to the conditions of slow

¹ “Erat homo pro patribus certans,”—(Irenæus, edition of Feuardentius, p. 284.)

² Verbum filius hominis factus est, ut assuesceret Deum habitare in homine. —(Irenæus, p. 289.)

and gradual development, which belong to our nature ; and an evangelist could say of Him, that He increased in stature and in favour. He passed through that first period of human life, at once so humiliating and so touching, when thought and language are by degrees unloosed—here was the man ! From His tenderest years His holiness manifested itself in His gentle and complete obedience to His parents ; at the age of twelve He confounded, in the temple, the judges and doctors of Jerusalem, and revealed His close communion with His Father—here was the God !

He had not a place where to lay His head. He traversed the towns of Judea and Samaria, and was seen resting from His fatigues. He hungered, thirsted, suffered, sank under the weight of His cross, the thorns of the soldiers wounded His brow, the nails of crucifixion tore His body—here was the man ! But, at the same time, He ruled over nature ; He spoke to the waves of the sea, and they were still ; He touched the blind man, and his eyes were opened ; He said one word to the paralytic, and he arose and walked—here was the God ! His sorrows pressed and accumulated on Him ; He was at last overcome by the very force of His anguish ; He died—here was the man ! But He had often spoken to death as a Master—the daughter of Jairus, the son of the widow, the brother of Martha and Mary, had been called back to life by Him, He Himself would break the bonds of the sepulchre, and break them for all mankind—here was the God ! If we pass from the domain of outward to that of spiritual life, the divinity and the humanity of the Saviour equally appear before us. He knew the sadness of isolation and of bereavement,—He groaned

within Himself over the death of Lazarus—"Jesus wept," says the evangelist—here was the man! But this same Jesus dried the tears of the afflicted by His mighty consolations; they came to Him smiting on their breasts, and returned with thanksgivings on their lips—here was the God! He was tempted by Satan, He endured contact with him in the desert, He heard his profane words as the first Adam had done in the garden of Eden—here was the man. But with three texts of Scripture, as with three pointed arrows, He transfixed the tempter, and had the right to say at the end of His earthly career, "He hath nothing in me"—here was the God! He passed through the extremest agonies of mental conflict—great drops of blood were on His brow—He lay prostrate in the dust of Gethsemane:—"In the days of His flesh," we read in the Epistle to the Hebrews, "He offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto Him that was able to save Him from death"¹—here was the man! But scarcely had He risen from His prayer, scarcely had He uttered those words of perfect obedience: "Father, Thy will be done!" when, on the very morning of the terrible day of His passion, the impious troop of His enemies fell down awe-stricken at His feet, unable to bear that glory of holiness and love which shone out from all His being—here was the God! He was taken to judgment, He was condemned—here was the man! As a sovereign, He pardoned sins—here was the God! His last struggle was the most mysterious. Bearing the world's condemnation, He cried, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"—here was the man! But immediately afterwards He spoke

¹ Heb. v. 7.

those grand words, "It is finished!"—here was the God! Forget not, my brethren, that many things which we have now presented to you as distinct and separate, were one in the unity of the life of Christ, and you will acknowledge with us that the evangelical history, from beginning to end, is but a commentary on the saying of our text: "The Word was made flesh."

Jesus Christ had Himself the constant consciousness of His nature as both divine and human. He speaks of Himself as the Son of man and as the Son of God. He declares that He had been sent into the world by the Father to save those who should believe in Him. He commands His disciples to baptize repentant sinners in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, connecting Himself thus with God in the solemn act which symbolizes the work of conversion. He especially insisted on His unity with the Father in His last conversations with His disciples, when He opened to them the depths of His heart, and gave them His sublimest teachings in the most touching form on the solemn eve of His solitary and bloody conflict. He feared not to say to them, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father. I am the way, and the truth, and the life. I and the Father are one." He directed His disciples to pray in His name, and He made their holiness to depend on their union with Himself: "I am the vine, ye are the branches." And not only did He thus teach, but He also allowed His enemies to accuse Him of making Himself equal with God, not protesting against the charge, but remaining dumb, even under the weight of this condemnation. To be silent at such a moment was to admit the accusation,—to acknowledge the truth of the fact. If the

charge had been false, He must have spoken at all risks. It would not have been lawful for Him to refrain from justifying Himself, for it is never right to allow a wrong to be committed when it can be prevented. It is evident, then, that Christ had a clear consciousness of His own divinity.

The apostolic church, again, has not ceased to proclaim the doctrine. The works of God have been attributed to Christ; a share in the creation and government of the world;¹ the raising of the dead and judging them; the rule of the church,² which supposes omnipotence and omniscience. Beyond this, the primitive church did positively worship Christ.³ "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit," said the first of the martyrs at his last moment. The apostolic church invoked Him as its Lord and its God,⁴ and declared that to Him every knee should bow. We see, then, that there is no medium. Either the Church was right in recognizing the perfect divinity of Christ, or else it fell into gross idolatry. Idolatry! the Church of the apostles and martyrs! There are some suppositions that one is ashamed of putting into words.

From all these considerations it follows that if there be one positive doctrine guaranteed by the most irrefragable testimonies, it is that of the divine and human nature of Jesus Christ. With it the whole of Christianity must fall, or at any rate what remained would not be worth notice. Whenever this doctrine has been weakened, the very bases of religion have trembled. All has been shaken, and the zealous efforts of the Church to strengthen her "corner-stone" have in all ages proved that she associated with the

¹ Col. i. 16; 1 Cor. viii. 6.

² Rom. xiv. 10; 2 Cor. v. 10.

³ Luke xxiv. 52; 2 Cor. xii. 8.

⁴ 1 Cor. i. 2.

triumph of this doctrine her preservation and her progress.

We may not therefore flatter you, O ye who from different points of view admit not this truth! Your position is that of the destroyers of Christianity. There are among you those who will willingly accept such a character. May we ask them for whose sake they do so? What is the motive that urges you to reject the eternal divinity of Jesus Christ? Is it for the sake of God or of man? For the sake of God, you will perhaps reply; as we might be induced to believe from your name of deist, to which, however, you have so little right. A deist, according to the etymology of the word, should defend better than other men the cause of God; but in this sense no one deserves the name less than yourselves. We have shewn you what God would be without the eternal Word. The Father without the Son is no longer the Father. In place of the living God,—the God whose name is love, whose compassions are stirred towards us, who speaks to us and helps us,—you give us an abstract divinity, afar off, hard, inflexible, who concerns Himself no more with our world than we do with the leaf which our hand has cast to the winds! You give us a phantom instead of a reality. We know not where to find your God, and we know that if He be found He has no word of love, no help in store for us. He has never dried a single tear nor made one heart glad; not even your own. Because your heart is barren, it has pleased you to make a God barren and cold like yourselves, and yet you profess to be in an especial manner the followers of God! You have libelled Him by representing Him as equally insensible with yourselves; and far from serving His cause, you

would have compromised it for ever if your words had been believed; for humanity will never content itself with a silent God. Would you declare it unworthy of His greatness to be so far occupied with poor humanity as to consent to the incarnation of His Son? You suppose, then, that greatness consists entirely in external glory, and have never understood that there is a glory of a far higher kind,—never known the greatness of love. From this latter point of view nothing is more beautiful, nothing more worthy of God, than the voluntary humiliation of His love for a mean creature. The meaner be the creature, the greater appears the love that saves him. Speak no longer, then, of the glory of God. Once more we say, “He that hath not the Son hath not the Father.”

Are you advocating the cause of man? But know you not that his conscience has never demanded anything but that which God has given it? Do you suppose yourself to know better than the human conscience, as it has spoken during six thousand years? How is it that you do not see that in taking away the Christ-God, you take the water from the burning thirst of man, and the bread from his devouring hunger. You disappoint his long-cherished desire. Without thinking of humanity in general, I will ask you yourselves: Are you contented with your doctrine; does it satisfy you? Has it comforted you in evil days? Is nothing still wanting to you? You will not dare to say so! You will not dare, whatever be your illusions, because all is wanting to you, and the Saviour, the Deliverer, has brought us all only in bringing us God.

There are others who deny the divinity of Christ, while still pretending to remain Christians. They

should know that their intermediate position is not tenable. It is not in fact intermediate. Their homage to Christ covers a terrible accusation brought against Him; they charge Him with falsehood and hypocrisy! Is it true or is it not that Christ affirmed His own divinity? If it be clearer than the day that He did profess to be the Son of God, it is equally clear that to deny His divinity is to proclaim Him a liar in the face of the world. It avails nothing to say with a certain philosopher: "The morality of the Gospel touches and penetrates me!" If Jesus Christ was not the Son of God, the Gospel ought to be torn to pieces as an imposture, and Christ spoke falsely through His whole life. He deceived His disciples in the very last night that He passed with them. He knowingly allowed His adversaries to commit a dreadful crime which He could have prevented by a word. Say no more, then, of His holiness—of His moral purity! Rather say, that in a sense the Jews and Pilate were right in condemning Him. But, O Lord, pardon our words; we tremble to utter them. Pardon them on account of the object we have in view, which is to tear off the veil from those pretended friends of the Gospel who believe that they love Thee while they accuse Thee of imposture. They may perhaps be alarmed at the thought of the blasphemy hidden under their negative words;—perhaps in the impossibility of recognizing an impostor in the humble Jesus of Nazareth, in the gentle Master, in the victim resigned and merciful even in the hour of His punishment, they will fall at Thy feet crying out: If He must have been either a deceiver or a God, we cannot hesitate—yes, this man was a God!

Let all those who might be tempted to question the

divinity of Christ carefully weigh these considerations. Let them be sure that on the day when the Church shall find herself assaulted anew on this vital point, even though by the most alluring mysticism, her voice, her great voice, which needs not councils to make itself heard, will resound as it did formerly in the days of Arius or of Socinus. The most terrible excommunication for a doctrine is the shriek of terror and indignation uttered by the Church when, wounded in the person of her divine Lord, she cries out like the women of Jerusalem: "I am seeking my Saviour, and I know not where they have placed Him." Ah! we hope that the old rationalism which is passing away may not reappear under more specious forms. It would be very soon recognized, and would be really nothing but the dead burying his dead.

It is to you, Christians, that the charge of preserving this glorious doctrine is especially entrusted. Doctrines are expressed in confessions of faith, but they must not slumber within them. They are only truly preserved by a living faith. If doubts arise around us concerning the human and divine nature of Jesus Christ, let us shew what we derive from it of comfort, strength, and happiness. Christ was a man like ourselves, experienced in all things save in sin; thus we have recourse to Him with fullest liberty, secure of His compassion. We take not a step in life but we find ourselves on His path. Are we walking through the rugged way of poverty? He has trodden it before us. Are we in the path of suffering? He has preceded us there also. Are we following the way of opprobrium? Which of us will be insulted as He was? Do we weep for a beloved one? He seems to say, "I also have wept." And have we at length

arrived at the rough and gloomy pass of death? He knows its anguish and its solitude. "He was made in all things like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest."¹ But this brother in weariness, conflict, and sorrow is at the same time the mighty God? In Him we are more than conquerors. If Satan and the world combine together against us, still are we sure of gaining the victory. It has been indeed already gained by Christ. His glory shall be ours. The past is effaced, the present transfigured, and the future radiant; for the God-Man was put to death for our offences, and was raised again for our justification, and has ascended to heaven to prepare a place for us, while He is ever by His Spirit present in our midst, to direct His people and to strengthen the poor Christian who bends beneath his daily cross. Oh! that he may preserve as long as he lives an ever-growing faith in the human and the divine nature of his Redeemer, assured of His tender sympathy by the former, of His effectual succour by the latter—of eternal salvation by the two combined. May he begin even here below the song which he will finish and repeat in heaven among saints and angels: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever!"²

¹ Heb. ii. 17.² Rev. v. 12-13.

VI.

THE PLAN OF JESUS CHRIST.

“I am not come to destroy but to fulfil.”—*MATT. v. 17.*

IN our last discourse we considered the nature of Jesus Christ. We recognized and adored in His person the God-man. Now we are to ask no longer what He was, but what He came to do on earth, what was His plan. That Christ had a well-determined plan follows from His declarations and from His entire life. How often did He not speak of a work which He had come to accomplish! “Father,” He said, on the eve of His death, “I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do.” What an admirable unity was there in His ministry! One thought animated Him from the first day to the last. He advanced towards the end which He had proposed to Himself without once turning aside, along a road most inflexibly straight, knowing neither rest nor relaxation. Not a single action can be cited that was not strictly the carrying out of His plan; and yet there was nothing constrained about Christ. He was not like those men who are imprisoned in their idea as in a vice. We feel that the plan of Christ was in a manner incorporated with Himself. He was so profoundly penetrated with it, that it was connected with everything in His life in the most natural and spontaneous way. He moved freely within the boundaries that He had traced out

for Himself; His words and His works flowed as from a spring, without calculation and without premeditation. How then could He be accused of not having had a uniform plan?

Rationalistic theologians have pretended that Christ formed a first scheme which failed, and that He then conceived a second which was entirely different. They consider the first to have been that of restoring the kingdom of Judah in splendour, and giving a new glory to the Jewish theocracy. It was in this sense, then, that He announced the acceptable year of the Lord in the synagogue of Nazareth; but not encountering the dispositions on which He had reckoned, He modified his plan, and instead of proclaiming a prosperous era, asserted that the kingdom of God belonged to those that weep. He would have thus thrown Himself upon a spiritual kingdom as in despair of His cause. But how, on this supposition of infidelity, can we understand the fact, that even before entering on His active ministry, Jesus Christ indignantly repelled in the desert the suggestions of Satan, tending to the materializing of His work? How can we explain it, that one of His first sayings to His disciples concerned His death? "Destroy this temple," said He, "and in three days I will raise it up. But he spake," adds the evangelist John, "of the temple of His body!" We shall not now set ourselves to refute in detail an objection so evidently contradicted by history. There is, moreover, one fact which predominates over all others; it is that of the divine humanity of our Saviour. Could we, then, admit that the God-man should have made His designs depend on external circumstances, and that His definitive plan should have been imposed on Him by a difficulty? So servile a dependence on

events cannot be reconciled with His nature as the Son of God most high. The reality of His sacrifice again would not be less compromised than His divinity. What but a mock sacrifice is one that is forced? Christ's sacrifice was only real if it was voluntary. He must have freely consented to it, and for this purpose He must have foreseen it, offered it as it were by anticipation. Everything in the work of Christ breathes a sovereign and absolute liberty, and therefore is it the work of love. "I have power," said He, "to lay down my life, and I have power to take it again." If He laid it down it was not because it was impossible for Him to do otherwise, it was of His own free will for the salvation of mankind. The plan of salvation was then evidently formed by Christ, and it was just the profound consciousness which He had of it that marked His entire work with a divine seal.

Let us now enquire, brethren, what this sublime plan was in all its grandeur! I find it admirably defined in the words of my text, "I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil." The plan of Jesus Christ was to accomplish the period of preparation. To accomplish does not mean to prolong, but to bring to perfection, to realize fully. In promising to accomplish the period of preparation, Christ did not mean that He would render it definitive, that He would bind us to the ancient law by consecrating it afresh; on the contrary He declares in these words, that He puts an end to this law, that He is Himself its end. For Him to accomplish the ancient covenant is to develop, to complete it. But it could only be developed by being spiritualized; now the ancient covenant spiritualized becomes the new covenant. We must expect that many institutions inherent in the first economy would disappear, that

many ordinances would be abrogated. It is a necessity of this accomplishment. The economy could only be truly accomplished, that is to say brought to perfection, when the more or less gross and material covering, which enclosed the truth should be broken up. There was then necessarily something to abolish in the ancient covenant, in order to its true accomplishment. When Christ says, "I am not come to destroy," we must not understand His words in an absolute sense, for it is a fact that the new dispensation has profoundly modified the old. The Lord intended to point out the close connection in which His work stood to former revelations. Far from suppressing these He rested on them, for in fact they had come from Himself. His mission, like all things great and fruitful, was essentially positive; He abolished only what stood in the way of the complete realization of the will of God.

And here, brethren, was the secret of Christ's reforming power. If He had been contented with denying and abolishing, His work would have had no originality, no vast or profound influence. The human soul has a horror of a void as to faith, and prefers a false belief to a cold incredulity. Before Christ came, all that had before constituted the religion of mankind had been disbelieved and denied. But a negation that is only a negation, has no force even for destruction. Men deny with their lips, but retain the superstition in the depths of their heart, and return to it in moments of suffering or of dread. The ancient philosophers confuted paganism during their life, but paid it homage at their death, by observing the ceremonies commonly practised. If Christ had said, I am come to destroy, and had said only this, it would have happened with Him as with His prede-

cessors. But he says, I am come to fulfil, I bring an absolute certainty, a positive truth; and I join it on to all that existed, true and divine, before me. At these words we feel that we behold not Him in a reasoner but a revealer, and we fear not to abandon an imperfect truth for one that is more sublime.

The plan of Christ, then, consisted in accomplishing the period of preparation. We have to determine how He understood this accomplishment, and what modifications of ancient institutions it involved. This subject is very important, for a confusion between the two covenants is one of the most fruitful sources of error in the church. The whole history of Christianity is marked by constant returns towards that past, which was abolished when it was accomplished. It was an admirable saying of Saint Augustine's, that the New Testament is hidden in the Old, and the Old shines through the New. But instead of entering into the spirit of these grand words, and reading the Old Testament in the light of the New, the very reverse has been done. The veil which concealed the face of Moses has been taken off only to be spread over the Gospel, and the divine book has thus been robbed of a portion of its power. This is what the Galatian and other churches did in the earliest times, and even in our day the same deplorable error has been too often incurred. It is necessary to compare all the erroneous views of Christianity with the Master's real plan, in order rightly to comprehend His thought, and to realize it in all its consequences.

You know that the period of preparation is not, according to our views, restricted within the limits of Judaism. There was also a less direct work of preparation, of which traces are constantly found in the

history of paganism. Among the heathen nations as among the Jews, we have recognized the progress of the desire of salvation. It was this desire that Christ came to accomplish, but as its perfect and divine expression is found in the institutions of the chosen people, we shall speak now exclusively of Judaism, and in showing how the desire of salvation in the descendants of Abraham was satisfied, we shall in reality exhibit the same with regard to all people, since the holy nation represented humanity before God.

If we consider the form which the desire of salvation assumed among the Jews, we shall perceive that it was confounded in their minds with the establishing of the kingdom of God upon earth. Their institutions were prophetic. Now the chosen nation was under a theocracy—the visible government of God. It was consequently to a restoration of the divine kingdom that their hopes pointed. They aspired not merely after individual salvation, but also after a grand development of the theocracy. Thus the prophet who immediately preceded Christ, summed up all the hopes of his people in these words: “The kingdom of God is at hand.” It is indeed true that God does not seek only to save individuals, but also to found a kingdom upon earth; man is not cast isolated upon its surface, but belongs to a vast body. His recovery can only be complete when a humanity after God is constituted anew, and the rebel world again forms a part of the divine kingdom. Jesus Christ coming to fulfil the ancient covenant, connected His work with this idea of the kingdom of God. He wished to free the idea from all imperfection, and to realize it in an absolute manner. His plan was to found on earth the true kingdom of God, and this involved the abolition of institutions

which, however useful for the gradual advancement of humanity, would have militated by their external character against the fulfilment of this great design. To accomplish the kingdom of God in abolishing its first and transitory form,—all the plan of Christ is here. We shall have to investigate with care both the abolition and the accomplishment.

The kingdom of God under the old dispensation presents itself to us first as a great prophecy of salvation. It is “the shadow of good things to come.”¹ Everything in the institutions of the people of God announced a Saviour—everything lifted towards God the desire of fallen man that was seeking that Saviour, and brought back also the promise of the Father, who would give Him to mankind. Nothing better characterizes the ancient dispensation than the expectation of the Redeemer. It is in this sense especially that Christ said: “I am not come to destroy but to fulfil.” Prophets and saints, ye faithful servants of God who, during so many ages, have sighed after the deliverance of Israel, I am not come to disappoint your desire, to give the lie to your faith! I am He whom you have been expecting, and I am here! I have no other mission in this world. I am come to accomplish all that you have wished—all that you have prayed for. You have asked a Saviour, I am the perfect Saviour, and if you could all re-appear in one day, you would recognize in me the end and accomplishment of your aspirations. Abraham would see in me the true child of promise; Moses, the great prophet who should come; David, the glorious son to whom an eternal empire was ensured; Isaiah, the mighty deliverer and the man of sorrows; all would adore me and say:

¹ Hebrew x. 1.

Look no longer for the Messiah, He is possessed by us. "I am not come upon the earth to destroy, but to fulfil."

Thus is it the essential plan of Christ to accomplish the desire of salvation, to reconcile man with God, to offer the sacrifice of redemption, to fulfil the promises. All His purposes connect themselves with this one. Whoever ascribes to Him any other object, has not understood our text. If Christ came for anything, but to save men, He did not come to fulfil the ancient dispensation; there is then no relation between the old and the new covenants, and the harmony of the divine revelations is destroyed. But far from this, the new dispensation bears the same relation to the old, as the answer to a prayer does to the prayer, or rather as the shadow projected by a body to the body itself. Jesus Christ, when referring to the sacrifice which should sum up and complete His redeeming work, said: "For this hour I am come." We have here the finest commentary on our text. To come on purpose to endure the cross, was to come to accomplish the law and the prophecies; for these had awakened in the heart of man the desire of a redemption. Definitively to found the kingdom of God by the reconciliation of man with Him, such was then essentially the plan of Christ.

This fulfilling of the ancient covenant implied that profound modifications should be made in it in the accomplishment of the Lord's design. The principal institutions of Judaism, such as we have already described it, were closely bound together by its one fundamental thought. Being sensible manifestations of the desire of salvation, they could not of course survive that desire. When once it was satisfied, their

continuation would have been unmeaning. To wish to transport the shadows of the old dispensation into the new, is to deny that the sun of righteousness and truth has risen. To perpetuate Judaism is to dispute its accomplishment,—is to say to Christ: Thou didst certainly form the plan of fulfilling the law and the prophecies, but Thou deceivedst Thyself. Every Jewish institution preserved in Christianity is, as far as it goes, giving the lie to Christ. It is an incessant protestation against His redeeming work, and, to employ the forcible words of Saint Paul, a frustrating of the Gospel of grace. We cannot be at once Jews and Christians—we cannot praise God that we have a Saviour, and act all the time as if He had not yet come!

Recall to your minds, my brethren, the principal institutions of Judaism, and you will perfectly understand the necessity for their transformation. The first and most salient feature of the old dispensation was its unspiritual character. Religion, under it, was more or less external to the man. Thus it multiplied forms and ceremonies; whereas a religion which easily penetrates the heart, which gains entrance and dwells there, needs not to be rendered visible to the eye by so many symbols. It is all the less without as it is the more within. Now the religion of the Old Testament was essentially external. We know the immense variety of its rites and ordinances, and the pomp of its worship. It made itself evident by ceremonies without number. It was restricted within the limits of a country, it had its visible centre within the walls of a sanctuary, it was incarnate in the priest, it was concentrated in the Sabbath day. I need not insist longer on this outward character of Judaism. It arose naturally

from the condition of those who were under the ancient covenant. How should religion not be external to man, so long as a barrier existed between him and God? He could not communicate freely with his God; the sentence of condemnation was between him and heaven. He was still in fear of God, for until the day of redemption he felt himself under the weight of His judgments. Man necessarily remained at a distance from a God with whom he was not at peace. Hence this external character of an imperfect religion, which only promised salvation, and bestowed it not.

But this external character must disappear in the religion of Christ, if He be indeed a perfect Saviour. The first effect of His work is to restore God to us, for the reconciliation is a reunion. For the future, communion becomes possible between God and us. He is no longer a God afar off, but a God near at hand. He is even willing to dwell in us, and thus religion which was once external becomes internal, that is to say, spiritual. If God be in us we shall not be compelled to seek for Him in consecrated places and holy days; He is with us everywhere, we are in Him. Thus Christ, in bringing forgiveness to the world, brought at the same time spirituality, which everywhere supersedes the external character of the ancient covenant. This covenant is only accomplished in being spiritualized. The spirituality is inseparable from the pardon. But the word spirituality is too vague, too general, to express the most glorious consequence of redemption. Let us rather say that the first result of the sacrifice of Christ was the gift of the Holy Spirit. You remember how often Christ renewed the promise of this gift in those last discourses when, taking in with

a glance His entire work, He reckoned up its glorious results as a reaper counts the sheaves of his field. This precious gift occupies the first place in His plan, because nothing could better convince us that the sacrifice of redemption had been accepted by God. Christianity is the religion of the Spirit just because it is the religion of pardon. Before the pardon was obtained, the Holy Spirit indeed acted on the hearts of men, but not in a continuous manner, because of the separation which existed between humanity and God. This separation exists no more, now that redemption has come, and God can henceforth dwell in us. The Holy Spirit conveys to us in a mysterious manner all the gifts of heaven, makes religion a life, a real inward life, and renders us participants of the divine nature. Christian spirituality has then nothing cloudy or intangible about it; it is exactly defined when it is called the presence of God in our souls, by His Spirit. It is in our view the divine pledge of pardon, and the strongest proof that there is no longer any distance between us and our heavenly Father. The gift of the Holy Spirit is the very accomplishment of the ancient covenant, and it involves the abolition of the inherent imperfections of that covenant. Wherever spirituality is wanting, you may be sure that men have fallen again from the New Testament to the Old, from the period of accomplishment to that of preparation! You may be sure that faith in forgiveness is weakened, that the work of the Saviour is misunderstood, and His plan disfigured! Let us now pass in review some few cases in which alterations are thus made in the Gospel.

Judaism was a religion of purely external authority, a ministration of the letter, to use the words of the

apostle Paul.¹ The revelation was graven on stone rather than on the heart of man. It was imposed on him from without. It was a sacred yoke under which he was required to bend. No deviation was allowed from the most inflexible uniformity, because there was no progressive assimilating of revelation, no unfettered research. The truth, like God himself, was external to man. Such is the meaning of those words: "the ministration of the letter." The new covenant, on the contrary, is called by the same apostle, "the ministration of the Spirit." Not that there is opposition between the letter of the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit. Nothing of this kind is intended. Christ said, "I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil." He did not destroy authority in religion. His mission was not negative in that respect any more than in others. Far from destroying authority, He accomplished it;—that is to say, He brought it to perfection by rendering it more spiritual, opening to it by gentle persuasion the domain of the soul. Thus, in the new covenant, as in the old, the Holy Scriptures alone convey to us the truth, and have in this respect a sovereign authority. But this truth, like the God whose expression it is, must enter within us. It must be written on our soul in living letters, and these letters are traced by the finger of the Spirit. It is He who "guides us into all the truth," according to the words of the Lord, by which we understand the truth of the Scriptures. "His unction," we may say with St. John, "teaches us all things." We no longer need that any but God should instruct us. Free access to Him is opened for us. Away, then, with all who would come between us and God! We have the privilege of communicat-

¹ 2 Cor. iii. 6.

ing freely with Him. It is our right; it is the right won for us by the blood of Christ; it is the consequence of pardon; it is the fulfilment of the ancient covenant. What shall we say, then, to those who deny us this right, who put tradition between us and God, and wish to impose it on us with authority? What but that they are overthrowing the plan of Christ, denying the efficacy of His death, and carrying us back to the point at which humanity stood before His coming! Ministers of the dead letter, pretenders to despotic authority in religion, whoever you may be, whatever be your disguise, whether Catholic or Protestant,—all ye who make truth an inert tradition, an iron chain to be passed on from generation to generation, you deny both redemption and the gift of the Spirit, and by your pretensions say to Christ: Thou hast not accomplished the ancient covenant, for we continue it as if Thou hadst not come.

The external character of Judaism is seen again in the law given by Moses to the people of God. The apostle Paul calls it the “law of commandments contained in ordinances.” It regulated, in fact, the smallest details of life. It guided men by its minute directions as by leading strings, and was more occupied with the outside of the cup than with the inside. A severe and terrible law, it had its sanctions in multiplied chastisements. It was for this very reason an impotent law, for terror alone has never changed a single heart. It belonged to the plan of Christ to give us a much higher law. In this sense also He said: “I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.” Let us beware of supposing that grace has abrogated law, considered as such, and set us free from the rule of holiness. This would be to say, “Let us sin that grace may abound;”

this would be to make Christianity a rebellion against conscience. No ; Christ, with all His mercy, did not come to destroy the law, but on the contrary to fulfil it, to complete it, to bring it to perfection. Woe to the pretended Christian, who imagines himself to be emancipated in this respect ! Jesus Christ enlarged the law in fulfilling it, honoured it in spiritualizing it. It is no longer a law of precepts. There is now but one commandment : "Be ye perfect, even as your Father who is in heaven is perfect ;" but from this commandment the Holy Spirit causes the whole of the Christian life to flow. He himself becomes, in deepest harmony with Scripture, a living law, acting rather by inspiration than by precept. "Being led by the Spirit, we are not under the law."¹ The new law is directed rather to the heart whence are the issues of life, than to the outward actions. Being a law of love, it works on the affections by renewing them, and the Christian is able to say, "The love of Christ constraineth me." It is, as Saint James says, a perfect law and a law of liberty—perfect even in its liberty ; for having no special directions, neither has it any limitations. The Christian is called to perfection, and Christ aimed at nothing less in His plan than the holiness of His disciples. What shall we think, then, of those who carefully collect the fragments of the ancient yoke which humanity was not able to bear, that they may impose it anew ; who constitute afresh a Mosaic code, multiply cases of conscience and enslave souls by minute regulations ? What shall we think, above all, of those who, denying the freeness of salvation, would bring us back to a servile and barren fear, to a proud self-righteousness and to the

¹ Gal. v. 18.

infections of a rigorous justice? What but that they are taking us from grace to law, from Christ to Moses; that they are denying both redemption and the Holy Spirit, and saying to the Saviour: Thou didst profess to accomplish the ancient covenant, but we continue it as if Thou hadst not come.

The Jewish worship bears, in a more evident manner than any other institution, the impress of the ancient dispensation. Sacrifice and the priesthood are the most striking features of this worship, and it is especially under this double point of view that it has been at once abolished and accomplished. The priesthood announced the perfect Mediator, and sacrifice was a prophetic type of redemption. The Saviour is the only priest of the new covenant, "a priest made after the power of an endless life. Because He continueth ever, He hath an unchangeable priesthood."¹ His sacrifice, being perfect and accepted of God, is substituted for all others: "Christ was once offered to put away sin."² If priests reappear, if sacrifices are presented anew, the ancient covenant still exists. All those who now maintain the permanence of the priesthood, and who cannot conceive of worship without sacrifices, set themselves against redemption. They contest with Christ the reward of His sufferings, which is the salvation of souls, and unconsciously accuse Him of error or of falsehood. Yes, wherever a priest officiates, wherever an altar is raised, there is a positive denial of salvation, and a witness against the Saviour's work. If we are told that priests and altars are found in temples erected to His glory, we reply that priesthood and sacrifices are in reality opposed to His glory, since they dispute the efficacy of His death.

¹ Heb. vii. 16, 24.

² Heb. ix. 26.

It is in vain that the cross on these churches is pointed out to us. The cross is but dead wood if the redeeming sacrifice is not fully recognized. The sweetest songs mingling with the fumes of incense prevent not Christ from hearing the lie that is given to Him by every priest before every altar. Thou hast not accomplished the ancient covenant, these vain ceremonies say to Him, for we continue it as if Thou hadst not come, in the very institutions which most clearly signify the absence of a perfect Saviour.

We need not insist on the external character of the Jewish worship, nor on the pomp of its ceremonies. It could only be celebrated in a sanctuary and on certain days. The Sabbath and the temple were strictly connected with Mosaism. Christ came not to destroy, but to fulfil. He destroyed not, then, the religious festival nor the solemn worship. But the entire life has become a Christian festival. Do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, singing hymns and spiritual songs. The Christian himself has become a sanctuary consecrated to God: "Ye are the temple of the Holy Ghost." I will go farther, and say, that the religious festival and the temple are not, properly speaking, excluded by Christianity, while they have no longer that monopoly of consecration which distinguished the Sabbath and the sanctuary at Jerusalem. Sunday is not the continuation of the Sabbath, but has been substituted for it by the necessities of Christian worship without being in itself more holy than any other day of the week. In Judaism one day of the week was sanctified—in Christianity the whole week is devoted to God. So also our temples are no longer more holy than our dwellings. The Spirit is not imprisoned within walls. "The hour cometh," said

Christ to the Samaritan woman, "when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit."¹ The fulness of redemption is denied, therefore, whenever consecrated days and places are adopted in an exclusive manner, and we are then warranted in saying with St. Paul, "Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. How turn ye again to these weak and beggarly elements?"² What, then, shall we think of those who make well nigh the whole of sanctification to depend on these beggarly elements,—who multiply distinctions in days and in food, who recognize in the year a season of religion after a season of worldliness, and who make their churches sanctuaries like that of Jerusalem? What but that they refuse, in spite of the Master's declarations, to admit that the ancient covenant is abrogated.³

There are two distinctive features of Judaism which, though apparently opposite, are closely connected with one another: these are, its national exclusiveness and its religious nationality. On the one hand the chosen people formed a nation apart, distinct from others—the kingdom of God was restricted within the boundaries of Judea. On the other hand, whoever was born of a Jewish father, belonged to the nation, and its privileges were transmitted with its blood. Every circumcised child became a child of Abraham. The prophets, indeed, often insisted on the circumcision of the heart, but prophecy was the anticipation of the new covenant. This spiritual and prophetic side of

¹ John iv. 21, 24.

² Gal. iv. 9, 10.

³ These considerations apply also to what is generally called *Sabbatarianism*, which is foreign alike from Christian antiquity and from the Reformation, and which, by Judaizing the Sunday, changes the nature of this holy and beautiful festival.

the Old Testament did not prevent Judaism from forming a compact national body distinct from the rest of mankind.

There is an intimate connection, brethren, between religious nationality and exclusiveness. When a religion is incorporated in a nation, it only exists among that nation. Like the nation it has a country of its own, it is attached to a particular soil and confined within the same limits as the people to whom it belongs. It shares in their isolation, and is, like them, restricted by time and space. We can say in what degrees of longitude and latitude it will be found, and we may borrow the famous words of Pascal's: Truth on this side of the mountain, error on the other. Religious nationality, then, narrows religion. It may seem at first to give it possession of a whole nation; but it is not so. It only possesses that nation in an external and superficial manner, while it has the same limits as the people by whom as a whole it has been received, and cannot by any possibility go beyond these boundaries.

Religious nationality in its most extreme exclusiveness, entered, as we have already shewn, into the plan of God, under the ancient covenant. The plan of Christ was just to take from religion this external and national character, and to render it at once human and individual. Christ did not wish to be merely a Jew. He called Himself rather the Son of Man. He was indeed sent first to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, but He declared that He had other sheep also, and that all together should constitute a single flock. The apostle Paul has commented on this promise, by his sublime saying, "In Christ there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scy-

thian, bond nor free; but Christ is all and in all."¹ In other words it entered into the plan of Jesus to found a Christian humanity, that should break through all the barriers of nationalities. Wonderful to say He has revealed to us not divinity alone but humanity also. Humanity has never felt its unity but in Him. Before His coming it was all scattered and divided. There were then Greeks and Barbarians, circumcised and uncircumcised, bond and free. Since Christ came there has been but one humanity. It is to Him, and to Him alone that we owe those grand ideas of association and fraternity, the abuse of which should not lead us to overlook their greatness.

But it is no vague idea of humanity that Christ has brought into the world. His plan went infinitely beyond this; He wished to found a great human community, and this great human community is the Church, the Church whose members are united to Himself as the branches to the vine, forming a living unity, the Church which is His body, nourished by His substance and His life! The Church is nothing more than the true humanity, humanity after God; for it recruits itself from all tribes and all nations, and the Saviour-God is worshipped in every language upon earth. We can no more say of the Church than of Christ, It is here or it is there. It is in every place where He is loved. Where Christ is there is the Church, there is Christian humanity, one in God through Him. He alone could throw down the wall of separation, and make one people out of two, because He alone has reconciled humanity with God, and because the plenitude of His redemption, like a broad river, overspreads the whole earth.

¹ Col. iii. 11.

Thus does all religious exclusiveness disappear in the plan of Christ, and religious nationality is alike destroyed, for exclusiveness follows it as effect follows cause. The Church is universal, because it is allied with no nationality, it rests on an individual profession of faith, not on one that is vague and collective, and binds no one in particular; it is built up with living stones, not with the confused dust of an unconverted multitude. Men enter not the Christian church as they became Jews, by birth and circumcision,—by an accidental fact and a form. To belong to the Church we must be born anew. The Master has said, “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God;” and these words are admirably interpreted by Tertullian in that famous saying, “We are not born Christians, but become such.” The entrance to Judaism was by birth, the only entrance to the Church is by the new birth. There is all the difference between the two methods of introduction, which there is between an involuntary fact and a moral one, between the birth of flesh and blood, and the glorious regeneration of the Spirit of God! The Church, according to Christ’s plan, is not a nation like any other, but a people that is such by its own free-will, recruited one individual at a time by personal and living faith. And as free-will belongs not to Judea nor to Greece, nor to any other country, as it descends from Him from whom all grace flows, and who is near to every one of us; as the Spirit bloweth where it listeth, and men have never succeeded in confining it to any form whatever, so this voluntary nation is the largest, the most human that can possibly be imagined. Thus those who look mainly to individual faith for the realizing of the Master’s plan, far from giving us a narrow religion, give us

primitive Christianity in all its breadth, the Christianity of Jesus Christ Himself, who accomplished the ancient covenant by abolishing its exclusive and national character! All ye, then, who would bring us back to exclusiveness and to nationality, you are restoring a dispensation that has been abrogated. Ye who derive a certain selfish satisfaction from narrowing the heart of God, and who make the members of the new covenant a stern and isolated people, almost meriting the calumnious charge brought against the early Christians, of hating the human race, do not deceive yourselves; you are not Christians, you are eighteen centuries behindhand in your miserable narrowness. You are Jewish Pharisees! Ye who conceive of the Church only as an immense frame, open on all sides, in which the world has a place and a right, and which you would gladly ally to divers nationalities, imagining that there is an English church, a German church, a French church, talk not ye of your breadth of mind! You are bringing back distinctions which have been abolished, exchanging the universal character of the Church for one that is private, local, and accidental—above all, enervating it by an unseemly mixture! Ye again who combine exclusiveness and nationality in the Church, who receive into it whole nations with all their successive generations, by an external ceremony, and think that by sprinkling water on the brow of your neophytes, you communicate to them the grace of God; and then to this frightful *multitudinism* (to employ a word of modern times), add the proscription for time and eternity of all who are outside your church; it is vain for you to inscribe universality on the front of your temples. True catholicity is neither external nor exclusive. If the faith of our fathers has been called

the pretended reformed religion, we must be permitted to call the opposite faith the pretended universal religion. You who profess it are all alike eighteen centuries behindhand, and you are unanimous only in saying to Christ, "Thou hast not accomplished the ancient covenant!" for your every effort tends to the continuation of that covenant.

Again, my brethren, the kingdom of God under the former dispensation was a theocracy, that is to say, an external and material government of God. There were not then two societies, one temporal and the other spiritual, but only one, which was at once temporal and spiritual. Jerusalem was at the same time the Jewish capital, and the holy city. Religion and patriotism were confounded together. Every offence against the law of the state was a religious crime, every religious crime was an offence punishable by the magistrate. The Mosaic code regulated civil life, no less than worship and doctrine. This absolute blending of the temporal and the spiritual societies makes us comprehend how the Jewish theocracy should have been established and maintained by material force. The swords of the warrior and of the executioner were alike consecrated to its service. It was this state of things that Christ came to abolish, in order to the accomplishing of the ancient covenant. The child-man had required such direct tutelage of God. Moreover, the dispensation of the law was a dispensation of constraint, the glorious liberty of the children of God was not yet originated. Redemption altered everything in this view as in others. The kingdom of the Holy Spirit cannot be assimilated to this material government of God. The gross type of a terrestrial monarchy became useless when the incarnation brought God near to man, and when the

Spirit descended freely from on high. After redemption constraint disappeared before love and its free persuasion. The theocratic form fell to the ground as falls the covering that has enveloped a winged insect. The ancient covenant could only be accomplished by the abolition of the theocracy strictly so called. This was expressly recognized by Christ when He said, "My kingdom is not of this world," a grand saying, whose meaning is clear as the light of day! "My kingdom is not of this world." What is this but to say that the spiritual society must never be confounded with the temporal; that the former must remain now as distinct from the latter, as they had been conjoined and mingled in Judaism.

Temporal society has its alternations, its revolutions, its triumphs. It falls, it rises, it falls again. The spiritual society, the Church, must remain fixed on the Rock of ages, which is not a creature of a day, not even an apostle, but the God who made the ages. No doubt the Christian belongs to both societies, and has duties to fulfil to the one and the other. Render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's—such is the Master's command. But it is well understood that if ever there be opposition between Cæsar and God, the Christian will not hesitate—his choice is already made. He will treat man as man, and God as God!

That which is especially abolished, my brethren, is the employment of external and material means for bringing about the kingdom of God. While these were in their right place in Judaism, they are wrong in Christianity. The religion of the Spirit must be established by the spirit. It must incessantly triumph over matter. It must not be said on the day of its vic-

tory It is not the truth but material force that has triumphed. The plan of Christ was to conquer by the spirit. This is why He not only prohibited the employment of force in religion, declaring that he who drew the sword should perish by the sword, and that consequently a religion that should defend itself by a material weapon, might perish also by that weapon, because it would have thus taken its place among terrestrial things; not only did He deprecate by anticipation all external constraint, all the spirit of vengeance, saying to His disciples, who asked that fire from heaven should consume the Samaritan village, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of;" but He also repudiated all pomp, all human greatness of any kind whatsoever. He was born in poverty, He lived in humiliation—there was no sort of display about Him. He was like "the things which are not," and in all times He has chosen such things to bring to nought the things that are. Far from investing His disciples with any outward strength or grandeur, He deprived them of all this, sending them forth as sheep among wolves. "Provide neither gold nor silver," neither two coats; be poor among the poor, weak among the weak, and nevertheless baptize all nations in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost! Thus did Christ desire that His cause should triumph not through worldly power but through weakness, not through riches but through poverty, not through glory but through shame. He never declared Himself a king but once, and this was before the tribunal of Pilate, when He had been smitten and reviled, at the very moment when He was to be given over to the Roman soldiery. O Christians, behold your King! He has thorns for His crown, and a cross

for his sceptre! Compare Him with the King of Israel, surrounded by his court and his armies, and then acknowledge that the ancient covenant has indeed been finally abolished. Acknowledge, also, that every attempt to make the Church a theocracy is a disgraceful falling back, and that any employment of force is equivalent to the giving up of the new covenant, a cowardly desertion of the cause of Christ, and a repudiation of His weakness and poverty. Oh! spare Him the insult of a protection which He has not asked, and which dishonours His gospel! And above all, transform not into a Jephtha or a Gideon, Him who only accomplished the ancient covenant by abolishing all constraint, and bringing to the world a truth sufficiently beautiful and comforting to win hearts by itself, without the foreign help which would convict it of impotence. Every persecution, small or great, is a sinful denial of the new covenant.

There is, however, one view of the theocracy according to which it is spiritually accomplished by the Saviour. The theocracy shewed us the kingdom of God as embracing all the different spheres of life, both individual and social, and absorbing while it embraced them. For the future the two societies are to be entirely distinct, but we are firmly convinced that that which is purely religious is called on to penetrate that which is temporal, to transform it, to model it after the thought of God. We believe that the plan of Jesus Christ comprehended, as a secondary object, the reformation of temporal society, to be worked out under the influence of the Gospel. Did He not Himself compare His kingdom to leaven, which gradually penetrates through the whole of the meal? This meal represents unconverted humanity—society taken

as a whole. The Gospel, like a penetrating leaven, acts strongly on this mass which is so difficult of transformation. It acts primarily on individuals, but also on the community. It is thus that Christianity has changed the old pagan society, that it has broken the fetters of the slave, emancipated woman, elevated the poor. It is thus that the Reformation has made sacred the rights of conscience, which had so often been despised. Thus, while not of the world, the Church acts mightily upon the world, and the more the two are kept distinct from each other, the more powerful and penetrating is the divine leaven, the more has the salt of savour. It would be easy for us to shew you that the countries where the great principles of justice and freedom are best carried out, are those also where the Church has exercised the most blessed and spiritual influence. All that is good in modern society is due to Christianity. Every desirable reform in social order, grievously imperfect as it still is, will arise from Christianity—true Christianity, individual and spiritual, separate from the world that it may the better save the world. I defy you to bring forward one idea of justice or righteousness which is not owed to Christianity. We put far away from us those narrow doctrines which condemn the Christian to a selfish isolation, and permit him not to occupy himself with the general interests of humanity, even though his aim should be to assert the rights of conscience. These doctrines are foreign to the plan of Christ. They dwarf it, indeed, under pretence of greater spirituality. They take from the Gospel its broad and fruitful operation, and were they to triumph, they would make the Church a narrow and barren clique. The Church, did we say? We were forgetting that the

word is forbidden us by these pitiful sects that recognize only scattered Christians, solitary exiles in a spacious Thebaid, from which, however, they carefully banish every heroic mortification.

The plan of Christ connects itself once more with the theocratic idea through that glorious future which it unfolds before our eyes. The kingdom of God is to triumph finally in every region. The resurrection, the new heavens and new earth, so clearly announced by the Lord, lead our thoughts to that blessed day when harmony shall be re-established, and the recovery from the fall complete,—that happy condition which the Scriptures express in these words: "God shall be all in all." The return of Jesus Christ to judge the living and the dead, will bring about this consummation, this accomplishment of all the dispensations. The prospect of His coming should be to us at once a stimulant and a consolation. Under all that afflicts us and saddens our hearts, let us say: He will return to re-establish His kingdom. Under all the humiliations of the present time, all the manifestations of our own weakness, let us say: He will come again with power. Under all the imperfections of our work, let us say: He will come to finish what we have so feebly commenced. We shall find in this thought a precious encouragement to redoubled activity. But while fully recognizing this prophetic side of the Lord's plan, let us beware of materializing it, as has so often been done in the Church, and setting before ourselves, through a gross interpretation of prophetic language, a felicity purely terrestrial, a glory merely external, adding also thereto the hope of a startling vengeance to be taken on the enemies of the Church. This would be a last method of denying

the accomplishment of the ancient covenant, and we must guard against it with all care in the study of prophecy.

“I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.” These words have now for us their full richness of meaning. The plan of Christ lies unfolded before us in all its grandeur. To found the kingdom of God by restoring, through redemption, man to God and God to man,—to set up at the same time the kingdom of the Holy Spirit, while abolishing all that belongs to the letter which killeth,—to inaugurate worship in spirit, and in truth, and the perfect law of liberty;—to establish on the basis of personal faith and on the ruins of an external religion the Church, the true Christian humanity, and by the Church, weak and powerless though it be in the eyes of the world, to penetrate and transform society until that day when the new earth on which righteousness dwelleth shall replace this world of sin and strife. Salvation, in short—salvation with all that that word expresses, this is the plan of Christ. A perfect accomplishment of the period of preparation, it surpasses all our desires. God has given more than we had dared to expect, and there is not a single aspiration, a single lawful wish, that is not gloriously satisfied by this divine plan.

You will, no doubt, have remarked and perhaps regretted, brethren, the polemical tone of this discourse, but it was impossible to us, in considering the plan of Christ, not to bring it constantly into relation with the doctrines by which it has been disfigured. Is it our fault if there is a church which seems to have devoted itself to the perversion of this plan in its every part; if, while Christ established the ministry of the Spirit and the law of liberty, it sets up by its tradi-

tion the ministry of the dead letter and the law of commandments ; if, while Christ inculcated worship in spirit and in truth, it builds temples as splendid as the ancient sanctuary with images in addition ;—if it speaks to the eye and not to the conscience ? Is it our fault if, while Christ said, “ I am the way ; no man cometh unto the Father but by me,” this church contradicts Him, and says, It is I that am the way ; pass by my priests and my saints,—if, while Christ has founded a spiritual society upon His word—a society distinct from the world, but open to all who name His name, it beckons the multitude on the one hand that it may introduce them into that society by an external sign ; and cries, on the other, Beyond me there is no salvation ; Woe to every one who admits not all that our doctors have taught ; if, while Christ said, “ My kingdom is not of the world,” it aspires to reign upon earth in the fashion of kings and princes ; while Christ was poor it seeks to be rich ; while He desired the shedding of no blood but His own, it sanctions persecution, and binds and imprisons the servants of God now that (to its great regret) it can no longer put them to death ? Is it our fault if it calls itself the Roman Catholic Church ? Let it not be charged on us that we oppose this church, but on the plan of Christ ! On the apostle Paul, also, and his epistles, in which still burns the fire of his indignation against all who would bring back the church from grace to law. If it has been thought allowable in a public discourse to place Protestantism by the side of Atheism,¹ it may surely be permitted us to place Catholicism by the side of Judaism. Moreover, there is nothing but love in our hearts for individuals. We understand the force of

¹ See the discourse of the Abbé Combalot.

prejudices. We know very well that there are brethren in Christ who have strayed into this vast church, where, under pretence of unity, tendencies so numerous find shelter. If we oppose Catholicism it is because we cannot endure to see so many noble spirits wasting themselves within it, and so many others scared away from Christianity because they confound it with a doctrine which nevertheless transforms it so completely. Ardently attached as we are to toleration, we do not advocate a false peace or politic concessions in religion, and as long as we possess any means of making ourselves heard, we will constantly declare that Catholicism is working in opposition to the plan of Jesus Christ.

But it is not in this church alone, my brethren, that we encounter tendencies opposed to the divine plan. The cause of Christian spirituality is not yet gained in the churches of the Reformation. Certain alarming symptoms of a return to Catholicism have been witnessed even in some of these. What shall we say of those clerical notions which have too often transformed the evangelical ministry into a sort of priesthood? What of those false doctrines regarding baptism, which, in the midst of protestantism, have endeavoured to enthrone the Romish sacrament—a sacrament saving by an outward act, regeneration flowing from the baptismal water? What of the attempt to organise Christian states, virtual theocracies, exactly reproducing the ancient dispensation, if you except prophecy and miracles? What of the union of various churches with the government of different countries, of the refusal of religious liberty among protestant nations,—of a human tradition of orthodoxy imposed without examination—of the admission of nominal

Christians in a mass into the spiritual society? What of every church that has not these words written on its doors, "No one enters here by birth, but by conversion!" What of all these deviations from the plan of Christ, except that they constitute Judaism, a denial of the new covenant, a return towards the old? I express myself with all the more freedom, because it is easy to foresee that this noble cause of Christian spirituality, so often smothered by its adversaries under shameful names, is touching now upon its triumph.

Is not the breath of God heard passing over the dry bones? Are not faithful Christians rallying round great principles? Are they not beginning to understand that the great question regards not little details of the church, but the church herself—the church that is only living when separate from the world? Do they not see that the generous desire to speak to the masses which possesses so many hearts will be all the better realized when we imitate more closely the primitive church that conquered the world, of which the apostle says it was the scum? Yes, a magnificent and fruitful unity is being constituted, to labour under circumstances peculiarly unfavourable for the realization of this plan. Work on, my brethren, in the track of the true principles. The question is not about particular views of the church, but about Christian spirituality, about the reign of the spirit, about religious sincerity and that personal faith which is alone real and saving—about the normal development of our glorious reformation, and a return to the most beautiful period of the church. The moment may perhaps have come when we must suffer for these great principles; they, even they, may be

about to receive their baptism. But be assured that it is worth your while to suffer for them, for it would be to suffer for God. Be assured that persecution has never interfered with the plan of Christ, since it forms a part of that plan—nay, it is, as it were, its crown!

Let the thought of this plan detach your minds from the trifles of your ordinary life. When you shall have given all your strength, all your time, all your prayers, to realize it, you will still have given too little. Never forget, above all things, that it has for its final aim the salvation of souls. Never attach yourselves to any truth, however beautiful, without connecting it with this ruling object. Let not meditation on the designs of God hinder you from realizing those designs to the extent of your ability. The plan of Christ requires rather workers than admirers. Realize it for yourselves by your personal holiness, which is one great object that it seeks. Realize it, also, for your brethren. Be never weary of setting forth the Saviour as accomplishing not only the ancient covenant that was written, but also that unwritten covenant which God has made with every man in his own heart and conscience. Implore those who are around you, to go to the Saviour! Tell them what He has been for you! Tell them that he destroys nothing but evil, nothing but sin, that is to say, all that mars your true nature, and that He fully completes that nature itself! Appeal to their aspirations after the future life, to their inconsolable sadness, and shew them that Christ alone can meet these inward necessities. They will perhaps allow themselves to be won over, they will perhaps seek Christ. But be not anxious! The Saviour has provided so well for the

penitent sinner, that it is impossible but that that sinner should reach Him—and you will have the joy of having helped forward the realization of His plan to the limit of your strength. You will also have to defend this plan against the doctrines that would pervert it. This is another method of promoting its realization. Truth has imprescriptible rights. We owe to it our testimony in season and out of season. But the duty of controversy is a delicate one, and the only way to fulfil it rightly is to imitate our Lord. Let your arguments, like His, be always positive. Destroy not save in constructing, abolish not but in accomplishing, never make a void in any heart by the pulling down of a false belief without immediately filling it up by a higher faith. Let it always be clearly understood that Christianity is essentially positive and affirmative. Seek, therefore, edification in all things, and press every doctrine and every truth till it yield abundantly its nourishing supplies. Never leave mere ruins behind you, but on these ruins establish the foundations of a new edifice in the souls of your brethren. You are to defend the plan of Christ in the way in which He Himself first laid it down in opposition to Judaism.

I shall point out in my next discourse in what spirit we ought to labour, by reminding you how the Saviour accomplished His plan. In other words, I shall speak of His holiness. And may God grant to us to be labourers with Christ in His own spirit, for the promotion of this great work.

VII.

THE HOLINESS OF JESUS CHRIST.

“Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us.”—I JOHN III. 16.

AFTER having considered the plan of Christ, we must now inquire in what spirit He realized it. It is not enough to have formed a sublime design, if the manner of its execution be unworthy of itself, if little passions are called into the service of a great thought, for the very beauty of the plan renders such discord only the more culpable and grievous. Do we not know by experience that it is possible to have the most generous and elevated ideas, to profess them even with a certain amount of sincerity, and nevertheless in carrying them out, to be obeying inferior motives? It is but rarely that one hears a man avow a low and interested object; and even were he to carry his cynicism so far as to do this, it would only be done in the strictest confidence. He would never dare to display before an assembled multitude a mean and shameful selfishness. The human conscience would not endure such a failure of respect, or would avenge itself for it by vehement indignation. Nothing better proves the power of conscience in spite of the fall, than the necessity under which the wicked man feels himself

of entering into negotiations with it. Before he can spread an evil doctrine, he is compelled to ask of his conscience a sort of *passport*, while assuming an appearance of generosity and moral elevation. He covers his flag that he may fraudulently hide his detestable merchandise. It is thus that systems the most materialistic are sheltered under great principles of justice and philanthropy. There is often no hypocrisy in this, or at least an involuntary hypocrisy, but there is self-deception. The apparent greatness of the design is not then a sufficient guarantee for the moral greatness of him by whom it has been conceived. Perversity may hide itself under beautiful and noble words. But without going so far as this, admitting that the plan is admirable and the integrity perfect, is there not a deplorable weakness inherent in human nature, which frequently causes the most elevated ideas of our vocation to be nothing more than an ideal which we have no hope of realizing? Is not this distance between our ideal and our actual life, one of our deepest and most constant sorrows? Is it not the seal of our imperfection?

We could not then be satisfied with recognizing that the plan of Jesus surpasses all that man had ever been able to foresee or to anticipate—that it is in fact worthy of redeeming love. If this plan of love be not realized by love, if Christ Himself come not up to the level of His designs, if it be possible to discover one shadow on the picture, one imperfection in His life, then this plan will prove to have been the purest and divinest dream of humanity, but nothing more; we shall have no Saviour, salvation will not have been accomplished. For it is not with Christ's plan as with others. We could imagine that in a moment of in-

spiration, a man of genius might conceive a fruitful idea, that he might launch it on the world, and that it might make its way there without his assistance. It matters little in fact in what manner he may defend it! It is not incorporated with himself. But the plan of Christ, on the contrary, cannot be separated from His person—it has for its first condition the holiness of the Saviour. Thus the question which is now to engage us is closely connected with that of which we treated in our last discourse. Was the Saviour perfectly holy? which is the same thing as to ask: Has His plan been realized, or was it one of those chimeras, one of those more or less brilliant clouds which pass over the horizon of humanity? I could wish, brethren, to demonstrate the holiness of my Saviour, by leading you to His feet; were it given me to make you behold Him as did the inhabitants of Judea eighteen centuries ago, I am persuaded that the conviction of His holiness would take possession of your minds with irresistible force. It would appear to you clear as the sun, it would flood your being like the light of day. His mild and gentle aspect, the noble purity of His brow, crowned with a compassionate sadness before it was crowned with thorns, His glance, profound as the love of God, benevolent as that of a brother, His speech severe, yet merciful, the group of afflicted ones pressing around Him as around their natural comforter, the traces of weariness and suffering on His features, reminding us that He had not a place where to lay His head—all this, at once divine and human, would tell you more than our illustrations can do. Indeed, to speak truly, these illustrations will be useless, if you have not beforehand obtained to a certain extent such a view of Jesus

Christ. If your conscience in reading the Gospel have not led you to recognize in Him the just and holy One, it will be of as little use to speak to you now of the holiness of Christ, as to talk of colours to one that is blind. I rely on that sudden irresistible demonstration which takes possession of the soul on its first contact with the Lord. If this fail, no proof will be convincing. To render it, however, more present to your mind and heart, to develop what is implicitly contained in it, to speak of Christ's holiness in order to send you back to Him to contemplate it more eagerly, to leave you before His absolute perfection prostrate in the dust, to kneel with you to adore, or rather to give voice to our common adoration, this is the whole aim of the present discourse, which I pray God to bless to you and to myself.

I shall not stay long, then, to prove the holiness of Christ. I like better to show than to prove it. From this lower point of view, however, we are very strong. If it be true, as we have said, that there is too often a want of harmony between a beautiful design and the acts and feelings of him who has conceived it, we must nevertheless acknowledge that a plan which is absolutely perfect, implies moral perfection. At the highest summit all the lines meet, they are broken and separated only lower down. The perfection of intelligence must correspond with the perfection of the moral life. We could suppose a thought only half enlightened to be compatible with a heart more or less depraved. But if the reason be completely luminous, we may conclude that the soul is wholly pure. As long as there is one sin in the soul, there will be a shadow over the intellect; if the intellect is wholly without shade, it is because the being to whom it be-

longs is without sin. The perfectly true and the perfectly good blend in one ray bright as it is pure. Thus from the perfection of the plan of Christ, we may at once infer His sanctity.

We have again His own testimony; "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" demanded He of His enemies. "The prince of this world hath nothing in me," said He to His disciples, at the close of His earthly career. We may invoke the witness alike of His friends and of His enemies. Those who have transmitted to us the narrative of His life were His immediate disciples. They lived in intimacy with Him; they not only saw Him in the solemn hours when He was teaching the people, but followed Him everywhere, even into the desert whither He loved to retire; they never left Him, and they would all have repeated, without hesitation, those words from the Epistle to the Hebrews,—“He was tempted in all points, yet without sin.” Where is the man, the hero, the saint, who could justify such a judgment under an inspection so constant? The testimony of the enemies of Christ is still more conclusive. Their settled design was to ruin Him; they not only watched Him but also laid snares for Him; and when the moment arrived for them to reap the fruits of these diabolical proceedings, when they betrayed Him to judgment, they were forced to suborn and pay false witnesses, and these could only allege a single saying of the Master's, interpreted in the most treacherous manner. What more brilliant homage could be rendered to the holiness of the Saviour? For the mere attempt to blacken it, it was necessary to purchase senseless lies. But the hatred of Christ's enemies speaks still more highly in His favour. When we see not only great criminals, like Herod, but even

honest men in the eyes of the world, like the Pharisees, sage sceptics like the Sadducees, flushed with anger against the Lord; when we see the man most highly esteemed among the nation, the high priest, so far carried away in a solemn hour of judgment as to smite the accused, we may rest assured that no partial holiness could have kindled this hatred, but that to bring the darkness into opposition so violent against the truth, nothing less was needed than light in its utmost brilliancy.

We have another irresistible argument of fact. The entire Church rests upon the perfect sanctity of Christ. On this faith it is founded. Take away this and it will crumble in the dust. Have we not then a right to infer from the solidity and majesty of the edifice the solidity of the foundation also? What! this temple, or rather this citadel, continually attacked, to which every age has laid siege in its turn, can it be founded on a legend? Instead of the corner-stone which seemed to us indestructible as a rock, shall we find but the shifting sand of a false tradition? Is it resting on a lie that the Christian faith has survived so many storms and conflicts? As well might we say that one of those Roman edifices which have conquered time so long, was built upon a frail foundation. Let us confess that the Church is a standing witness to the holiness of Christ.

But the very idea of the Saviour's holiness, as set forth in the gospel, guarantees its historic reality. Such an idea had never existed before Christianity. Glimpses had been gained of moral perfection, but how restricted were they in Judaism, how debased in paganism! Christian perfection, by which I understand perfection such as the gospel represents, this ideal of humility and love, could only be known by being realized. A his-

tory, a divine history, is at the basis of this entirely new conception of sanctity. Whence, then, could the colours have been taken in which to paint the picture of a life like that of Christ? Had anything at all like it been seen before? Was it from Greece that the humility could have been borrowed? Was it the severe Jewish theocracy that would have supplied the love? Add to this that it was in the period of the most frightful corruption that this type of perfect goodness must have been invented! If the gospel be an invention we hesitate not to say with Rousseau, that the inventor is more wonderful than the hero! It is much easier to believe in the holy life of Christ, than to believe that the Evangelists imagined such holiness. Both are miracles, but the former appears to us the more rational, and as this is the grand support of our faith, we hold to it with the strongest certainty and the most joyful trust.

The holiness of Christ being thus established, we will proceed to indicate its general characteristics. It is pre-eminently human, it goes not beyond the conditions of our nature. The life of Christ was wholly a man's life, or rather it was the life of God in a human life. The more the human life is divine, the more nearly does it approach its ideal—its true destination. Christ was with God—He lived in God—and therefore was He a perfect man, the type of humanity. Therefore is He our model and our law, and the apostles were warranted in saying to us, Be imitators of Him, cherish sentiments like His.

More than this, we venture to affirm that Christ even experienced the trial of His liberty. We believe with our whole soul in His original purity, but we believe equally in the reality of His abasement. He

submitted Himself to the moral condition of humanity. He had His conflict, His temptation, and the perfection which He possessed by nature, He, as it were, acquired anew by the determination of His will. There is here a great mystery. How can we conceive that the Son of God was tempted? But how can we admit that the Son of Man, the Second Adam, could have saved the lost race without a moral probation? The night in Gethsemane, those cries and tears, that agony of conflict, that triumph purchased at the price of so much suffering, the whole touching scene represented by the evangelists, can it have been nothing but a vain illusion, a kind of theatrical representation? Speak no more, then, of Christ as our model? If His divinity placed Him above trial and conflict, we have nothing in common with Him. His temptations, no doubt, differed from ours. The tempter had nothing in Him, while He finds but too much support in our natural dispositions. He never succeeded in exciting one single evil desire in the holy soul of the Redeemer. But it is not the less true that Christ had to make efforts of will to maintain the sanctity that He had brought from heaven. When the Scriptures tell us that He groaned and cried to God, we see not in these words a mere image, but a positive and precious fact, establishing a complete unity between Him and ourselves. The severity of Christ's trial was the seal of His sanctity. We know not what to think of any one who has not been tried. The secret forces of evil may be slumbering within him for want of an opportunity of coming forth. There is no certain holiness except holiness manifested amidst suffering and peril. Was anything wanting in this respect to Jesus Christ? What snares, what assaults, what

endurances were omitted in His case? The people wished to make Him a king, and afterwards put Him to death. He passed through the trial of their excessive enthusiasm and through that of extremest shame; and finally allowed Himself to be led away to execution. Holiness crucified, is not this holiness made perfect? Would it be possible to go beyond this? Who does not see that a trial, an earnest human probation, was necessary to the glory of the Redeemer?

The holiness of Christ, while profoundly human, was distinguished by a character exclusively its own; viz., the harmony of all the qualities of the soul. We do not find this harmony in any man. Take the greatest men and you will see that their greatness springs from the extraordinary elevation of one of their faculties. That which strikes us in them is that which rises above the level of their soul. An isolated quality is all the more observed as it is more detached from the main portion of the moral life. And yet this indicates imperfection. What is important is, that the whole moral life should be elevated and purified, and not that it should project itself peculiarly in any one direction. We are constantly allowing ourselves to be deceived in this respect. We experience a more prompt and lively admiration in seeing the waves of the sea raised by a tempest than in looking on the same waves when calm and smooth. And yet heaven is better reflected in the sea at peace than in the sea in a storm. Human greatness, as it appears to us ordinarily, is like an impetuous wave rising above the others, majestic and roaring. The sanctity of Christ is like the limpid water that reflects the blue of heaven in its immensity and its peaceful brightness. There is no show even in His holiness, just because it is perfect.

It rises from the depths of His soul in every respect worthy of itself; it is more inward than outward; it sacrifices nothing to the glory that is of men, and has neither rise nor fall. Thus not one of the grand words by which we designate exceptional qualities of the soul or spirit can be applied to Christ. We should never say that He had a wonderful genius, nor that He was a hero. We feel that neither intellectual greatness nor moral greatness, regarded separately, can be ascribed to Him. One word alone is worthy of Him, and that is holiness, because it comprehends at once every perfection.

But it is not enough, brethren, to consider the general characteristics of the holiness of Christ. We must know more particularly in what it consisted. Pagan antiquity had already discovered that holiness consists in the imitation of God. The Gospel has admirably expressed this pregnant truth. "Be ye perfect," said Christ, "even as your Father who is in heaven is perfect." What could be more clear or more conformable to the simplest dictates of conscience? Where should the type of perfection be found but in God himself? Could we believe in perfection anywhere but in Him? Is He not the supremely beautiful, true, and good? It is impossible to conceive of anything better than a life that should be conformed to Him, and reproduce the features of His divine image. If we wish, then, to form a precise idea of holiness, we have only to ask what is the nature of God. It is not necessary to enumerate all His glorious attributes. There is one which predominates over and comprehends all the others, and this is love. "God is love," said Saint John. Love is the nature, the very being of God. The Gospel reveals this to us, or I

should rather say reminds us of the fact ; for on hearing this revelation conscience embraces it as a truth for which it was prepared, nay, which it had once known. There is not a single human conscience which does not recognize that love is all that is morally greatest and most beautiful. If, then, Jesus Christ was perfectly holy, He must have perfectly reproduced the divine nature, and His life must have been the perfect manifestation of love, for love and holiness cannot be separated. To prove to you His holiness, we have but to shew you His love, as our text formally invites us to do : “ Hereby perceive we His love, because He laid down His life for His brethren.” Love manifests itself in the different relations of life. But we sustain relations first to God and then to our brethren. The law of love is realized in this double connection. The great commandment both of the old and the new law comprehends alike love to God and to our brethren. We have to shew you, then, the love of Christ in regard alike to His Father and to man.

Love consists, as Saint John teaches us, in giving one’s life for others. It is a free and wholly disinterested gift. It reveals itself first by the abnegation of self, by inward self-renunciation. It realizes itself afterwards by sacrifice, or external self-renunciation, and is finally consummated in the divine and immortal joy of love ; for a sacrifice that brings not happiness, but is offered unwillingly, is not a true sacrifice. In order, then, to depict to you the holiness of Christ, we must describe as far as it is given to man to do so, His inward self-renunciation, His sacrifices, and constant self-immolation, and the holy and divine joy of His love, whether it had God for its object or shed

itself abroad upon our poor humanity. If we succeed in thus engraving the thought of our text upon your hearts, we shall have nothing to add for the establishment of the holiness of the Saviour, for what is there more holy, more perfect, more divine than love?

Humility is the first form of inward self-renunciation. Without humility it would be in vain that we should yield up all our property, or give our bodies to be burned. These sacrifices would not be sacrifices, or rather they would be offered to ourselves. Our tears and our blood would be shed upon the altar of pride and selfishness. Without humility sacrifice is hypocrisy, and devotion a lie. We must speak, then, primarily of the humility of Christ. Recollect the picture which Saint Paul draws of it in these words: "Being in the form of God, He thought it not robbery to be equal with God" (because such equality properly belonged to Him), "but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself."¹ The incarnation, the voluntary poverty, and the crucifixion of Christ were the principal manifestations of His humility. We have already had occasion to insist upon the infinite abasement, the self-annihilation of the Son of God. It is evident that He who being rich,—rich in all the divine glory, made Himself poor—poor as being a man, poor even among men, would never seek for earthly glory. After what He had left in heaven, after abandoning the right hand of the Eternal and the throne of omnipotence, what could our lower world, our world of sin have to offer Him? And yet, when we remember the pitiful inconsistencies

¹ Phil. ii. 6-8.

of human nature, we are filled with admiration in considering the invariable humility of Christ in the different phases of His life. How signally was it displayed with regard to His Father! We are touched by the self-abnegation of John the Baptist, who, with holy impatience, transfers the homage and admiration that he encounters to the person of the Saviour. But how does his humility pale before that of Christ? The only Son of God, He utters not a word, He performs not a miracle without rendering to Him the glory. He is never weary of repeating that He is doing His Father's work, that He is sent from Him. How often do not we, the poor messengers of God, the miserable and unworthy ambassadors of His grace, turn to our own profit the glory which belongs to Him alone! The earthen vessel in which the heavenly treasure has been deposited, takes pride in possessing it, as if it were truly its own. And yet He in whom dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, the eternal Word incarnate, the pre-eminently just and holy One ceased not during all His earthly course to prostrate Himself in spirit before His Father. He was more humble than any of His servants. He declared that the Father had given Him all power. He went so far as to say, "I can of mine own self do nothing. As the Father hath life in Himself; so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself."¹ If He spoke it was in His Father's name: "My doctrine is not mine, but His that sent me."² If He wrought a miracle, His eyes raised to heaven in humble prayer, shewed whence He drew His strength. He speaks of "the works which His Father had given Him."³ If disciples came around Him, He attributed it neither to

¹ John v. 26, 30.² John vii. 16.³ John v. 36.

His divine and powerful words, nor to His brilliant works: "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." If a feeble witness of the truth, such as he who now addresses you, your brother in sin and condemnation, were to insist with so much energy on his absolute dependence upon God, his humility would be remarked; it would be justly considered rare and exceptional. What shall we say, then, of our divine Saviour? As high above us in holiness and in power as the heaven is high above the earth, He submitted Himself to His Father as not one of us has ever done. Let us confess that there is as great a distance between His humility and ours as between His perfection and our unworthiness.

Let us notice this same humility in the relation of Christ with men. Who has ever worked in the kingdom of God as solitarily as He did? Who has laboured under the weight of such opprobrium? I speak not of the Christians of our day. Some few of these have suffered injuries for Christ. But the greater part know only through history what Paul calls the reproach of Christ. They are well treated in the world. They encounter, indeed, a certain amount of opposition, but between such opposition and ignominy the distance is great indeed. No, we know not what it is to be regarded as the lowest of men, as the offscouring of the earth. We are not cast down in the mire, scourged, and insulted. A polished and refined society endures us patiently, probably because we endure it but too well ourselves. There are countries, in fact, where piety is a ground of public respect and consideration. There are some—and we do not envy them—where evangelical Christianity stands well at court, where it may count on the highest dignities and the

most coveted employments. I know that it is not the same everywhere. The reproach of Christ may be endured in the bosom of the family by one who is alone in his faith, and adheres to it steadfastly, as also in certain countries where persecution is still permitted. But how much is there of compensation! By the grace of God there are on the earth a great number of believers scattered over every place. Christian sympathy is like an immense electric chain that vibrates in a moment from end to end. If in our day a Christian is anywhere persecuted and trodden down, he excites the most ardent interest, he is the object of a thousand prayers; his name flies from mouth to mouth, he may count on a veritable Christian celebrity. Now, unless he humble himself all the more as he is elevated in the esteem of his brethren, that thirst for glory which is imperishable in our souls, will be rekindled in him, and he will enjoy the treacherous praises which reach him disguised as prayers. The natural heart will be gratified in its most inextinguishable craving. Something like this may have occurred in the early experience of the Church at that period when a man might be justly said to bear in his body the marks of the Lord Jesus. When the apostle had been beaten with rods by the sergeant of the sanhedrim or treated as a fanatical fool, he could mount again to the upper chamber in Jerusalem. There he was surrounded by his brethren, who covered him with their tears, and testified to him at once their love and their admiration. In this limited circle, pride might still find nourishment. Among all the servants of God One alone laboured at His work without any compensation of this kind. Those who distributed glory among His nation were His enemies, His fierce traducers.

It would have been easy for Him to gain them over by a single word of compliance. But instead of uttering such a word, He assailed their hypocrisy with an anathema that could never be forgotten. The people would have willingly adopted Him as their king, but He not only repelled their gross homage, but even crushed under His feet their most cherished prejudices. His was an aggravated solitude. He laboured without the sanction of the leaders of His people, and without the sympathy of the people themselves. A few disciples were certainly seen around Him, but they were so poor, miserable, and ignorant that they only added to His shame. Moreover, even they did not comprehend Him. They had not as yet a just idea of His work. Morally, He accomplished that work alone. And when the hour of greatest agony arrived; when He had to plough the furrow in which the seed of eternal life should be deposited, to be watered by His own blood, He looked around, and behold He was alone, without one to support Him. His friends had fled. In the vast universe there was not a single soul truly in sympathy with His own. His opprobrium was complete and absolute. Oh solitude of my Saviour! ignominy unexampled, shame voluntarily incurred! Humility without any parallel!

Humility is the first, but not the only expression of self-renunciation. It is not enough to forego all glory; we must also give up our will, our interests, all that we possess. To give up our interests, our will, ourselves for God, means primarily to obey Him. Obedience is the reality of love. Sudden emotions of the heart, ardent feelings, burning words of admiration, are not worth so much as the smallest act of submission. It is easy to be affected, or to burst forth

in praise. There may be a kind of fever, an excitement of heart which sinks as quickly as it rose. Love is neither an ecstasy nor a song; it is a gift, and the only true gift is the gift of will. Obedience to God is, then, the most sincere manifestation of love towards Him.

You, know, my brethren, the extent of Christ's obedience to His Father. The entire work of redemption was an act of obedience, and we love to insist upon this point, because it brings out the profound harmony that existed between the Father and the Son. The salvation of men was God's will; in accomplishing it Jesus Christ realized His Father's design. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself." From the beginning to the end of His career the Saviour had the profound consciousness of this plan of infinite mercy. He carried it out in every part with the most absolute submission. The Son is represented to us as, even before His incarnation, accomplishing the will of His Father. From all eternity He had said, "Behold, I delight to do Thy will," and had presented Himself as the pure victim for the great sacrifice. During all the course of His earthly life He had but one thought, and that was a thought of obedience. His first words cited by the evangelist expressed this very thought: "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?"¹ When in the full activity of His ministry, He could sum up that ministry in words like these: "My meat is to do the will of my Father." He followed step by step this holy will, caring for nothing beyond. If He entered into any town or village, it was by the impulse of the Spirit. When the Spirit drove Him

¹ Luke ii. 49.

into the desert, thither He went. When sent apart to avoid His enemies, He remained in the most solitary places. When led to Jerusalem even at the moment of greatest peril, the hatred of the Jews being ready to burst forth with savage violence, He hesitated not. He who yesterday concealed Himself because His Father willed Him to do so, appears to-day with the utmost calmness in the midst of the astonished multitude, in the presence of His trembling adversaries, in the temple or the public place, in the name of the same will. He sought not to hasten His hour, but when it had struck, that hour of sorrow and of shame, He cried, For it I am come. If you would know what perfect obedience means, ask the question in that garden of Olives, where, at the sight of the cup of condemnation, He had no words but these, which have never been surpassed as the expression of a submissive heart: "Father, not what I will, but what Thou wilt. Father, Thy will be done." And forget not that all was voluntary in His sufferings, that He had but to make a sign and that gloomy garden would have become an Eden of glory. And yet no sign was made; He remained in the dust, agonizing and groaning until the armed troop that followed the traitor took possession of Him. He made not the sign, because He had said, "Father, Thy will be done," and the will of the Father pointed to the sacrifice of Golgotha. He obeyed even unto the cross! Could obedience go farther than this?

If self-renunciation is expressed primarily by humility and obedience, it manifests itself also in a very touching way by mercy. Mercy is the love of the unhappy, of those from whom we can derive no advantage, who have nothing to give us in exchange for our

affection. It is a love truly gratuitous and disinterested. Such was the love of Christ to men. This mercy overflows from all the words and actions of the Saviour. There is one saying of the evangelist Luke, which has always profoundly affected me, and which, in its simplicity, appears to me to say more of the compassion of Christ than all his illustrations: "Then drew near unto Him all the publicans and sinners for to hear Him."¹ What was it which urged them thus to approach Jesus Christ? Whence came this attraction? It was not certainly the hope of finding in Him a convenient indulgence for their sins. Never had purity and holiness such as His been seen before. And yet the publicans and persons of wicked behaviour pressed around Him to such an extent as to give rise to the accusation that He was one of themselves. Ah! it was because until then they had felt themselves despised, repulsed, severely judged. And here was a being, pure among the purest, a man perfectly holy, who, far from repelling them, called them to Him, and spoke to them with love! For the first time they are loved—loved in spite of their misery, or rather on account of their misery. The glance of Jesus falls upon them with indescribable and tender pity. Never had they felt what they feel now on seeing themselves thus welcomed and comforted after having been for so long a time the outcasts, the very shame of a nation that knew no better than to tread them under foot. They had not yet learned that those who are last in the view of selfishness, which lives but in degrading its neighbour, are first in the view of love, which only lives in freely bestowing. The favourites of a true love are the unfortunate and

¹ Luke xv. 1.

the miserable. The more weak, forsaken, and lost is any being, the more joy does free love experience in giving itself to that being, the more opportunities does it discover for its own manifestation. Thus does the Son of Man, who was the incarnation of that free love, compare Himself with good reason to a kind shepherd, who should leave his ninety and nine sheep in the fold to go and seek in the desert for the one that was lost. Poor sheep! it is not worth the trouble of the least effort to find it; it is of so little value compared with those which are left to the shepherd; it is so mean, so far off, so likely to die! Thus would selfishness speak. But that which repels selfishness animates pitying love. The sheep is miserable, worthless, lost, afar off; therefore is it that I love it, that I will go after it until I find it. The objections of selfishness are the arguments of love. "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

There was near to Christ, as it were, a meeting place for weakness, misery, and ruin, of every kind! First, you find there the little child, its very feebleness rendering it dear and precious to the Redeemer. They sought to drive it from Him, but He took it in His arms, sheltered it with His love, and bestowed on it that benediction which rests on all the cradles of the newly-born: "Suffer them to come unto me." By the side of the child we see the ignorant, uncultivated man, whom the disdainful doctors were disposed to trample down. Eternal wisdom receives him in its tender pity, for it has milk for those who cannot bear strong meat. Here, again, is the poor man who has waited long enough on the threshold of the rich, enduring contempt and scorn. He has at last found his protector and his friend, and this friend is his God.

The divine poor man, who went through all Judea, without possessing aught that was His own, chose to pass through poverty in order to do it honour. He left in it as it were a ray of brightness from His presence. He has identified Himself with the poor, and suffers in them to the end of the world. He hungers and thirsts with them. The sick, the paralytic, the blind, alike surround the divine Comforter. They are His habitual attendants. All suffering follows on His steps. Poor widow, who hast lost thine only son; Martha and Mary, sorrowing sisters, who buried your beloved brother three days ago, we find you, also, at His side. And how should you not be near Him? Do we not twice read in the Gospel, "Jesus wept?" He wept for your grief. He wept with you! He was the very comforter that you needed. But what! Does the extortionate publican dare to approach Christ? What! that lost woman, laden with vice, infamous even among the lowest, is she also at His feet? Shall we not say with Simon, Send her away, she profanes the threshold that she crosses? No, no, leave her near the gracious Master! Where shall she go if you drive her away? Has she any other refuge? Who else could say to her, Daughter, go in peace, thy sins are forgiven thee? Fear not, then; if she has come, bringing such shame into such a house, it is because she read the heart of Jesus, because she heard the call of that compassionate love which is greater than all sin. She was made for Christ; I appeal to her ruin and her repentance in proof of this. Christ was made for her; His mercy shews it. And so He passes on, to employ the beautiful image of Scripture, like a king in the midst of the afflicted ones, like the peaceful king of everlasting consolations, and

wherever now He dwells, whether in a church or in the person of a true Christian, this same attraction of compassionate love is exercised, and we see again a concourse of feeble, miserable, ruined creatures. Woe to the Church or the Christian, of whom it cannot be said, "The publicans and sinners draw near!" It is an indication that pitying love is failing sorely within them.

We have only glanced at the compassions of Christ, for indeed they are infinite; and if it is true that they have descended first on the most debased and miserable beings, not the less have they been shed down on all the lost race. As all men are included in the condemnation, so are all embraced by the compassions of Christ. He had pity not only on the publicans and persons of wicked behaviour, but also on the Pharisees themselves. Did He not weep over Jerusalem with all its inhabitants, in the first ranks of whom were found His enemies? Listen to the sad complaint of His slighted compassion: "O! Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!"¹ It is not now over His friends that He weeps but over His enemies. He has nothing to expect from them but death, but it matters not, He loves them in spite of themselves, because His love is not measured by what it may receive, but is altogether free. Even on the cross His mercy is still displayed, and He dies forgiving His murderers. He has borne in His heart the burden of all our sorrows; His pity has taken on itself the condemnation of the whole world; He has assumed the weight of it to Himself, and it was this

¹ Luke xiii. 34.

dreadful load that crushed Him down in the dust of Gethsemane!

But, my brethren, compassion is not enough, there must be also consolation. Mercy is only complete when it is efficacious. The compassion of Christ always resulted in deliverance, and it is here that we must admire His life of self-denial and suffering which manifested the inward by the outward self-renunciation. He went about, we are told, from place to place doing good. He knew neither fatigue nor danger when He could help or comfort. He forgot His hunger and exhaustion to announce the kingdom of God to a poor harassed soul; He hesitated not to brave all dangers to bring divine succour to His afflicted friends at Bethany. Nothing interrupted Him in doing good, not even the announcement that His mother and His brethren were seeking Him. He subordinated alike His natural affections and His bodily wants, to the fulfilment of His mission of love. We feel that He gave Himself up without reserve. His love amounted to self-immolation, constant self-immolation. He regarded Himself from the beginning to the end of His life as the holy victim of love. He gave up not only His days, not only His hours of rest, not only the moments when He might have been enjoying intercourse with His family, but even, when necessary, the hour of His prayer, that period of heavenly refreshment, of ineffable communion with His Father. He abridged this divine and mysterious engagement that He might speak to the ignorant multitudes who followed Him into desert places, because He had given them food by a miracle. Was there ever devotion comparable to His? You will observe that we have not spoken of that sacrifice which connected and summed up all the rest, of that sorrow

of sorrows, that bleeding sacrifice, in which the most terrible sufferings of the body were but a feeble image of the agony of the soul! If love consists, as our text says, in giving our life for our brethren, shall we not say,—Yes indeed; we have learned in Him what love is—we have learned it in such a way as never to forget it more!

But we have not yet said everything about the love of the Saviour; His life could not have been one of perfect love if He had not added joy to sacrifice; first, because a sacrifice offered in bitterness is illusive, and then because joy, a pure and holy joy, is inseparable from love. For love dilates our soul, makes it fruitful, answers to its highest wants. The communion of hearts in love, is the pre-eminent happiness. We may hence conclude that where joy fails, love also is wanting. There are then only partial sacrifices, half refused or disputed with God, which leave sadness behind them. The complete sacrifices, which proceed from the annihilation of self-will, bring joy; they are without reservation, and they consummate our union with God. We know already that Christ must have tasted an infinite joy, because His sacrifice was complete—a joy indeed severe, sometimes even mournful, but still an immortal joy. Veiled for an instant it reappeared more lively and intense. This joy consisted primarily in the feeling of His profound union with God. Though on the earth, He still dwelt in God, spiritually He had never left the bosom of the Father; He had remained the only and eternal Son. He brought to Him all His thoughts as all His actions. He was one with the Father, though still subject to the conditions of His human existence. He has shewn us by His example that no barrier exists between God

and ourselves, and that a life of prayer is a life in heaven. It is permitted us to imagine what the Saviour must have experienced when, after having endured the conversation of the perverse doctor, who had been seeking to take Him at a disadvantage, or after having suffered from the slowness of His disciples to believe and to understand, on the evening of a troubled day of fatigue and sadness, He climbed the desert mountain, and there poured out His heart, His bruised and broken heart, into that of His Father! What joy can be compared with this divine effusion, this ineffable communion? It was the consummation of the mysterious unity! There was a great joy even in the sufferings endured by the Saviour. Was He not suffering to accomplish the Father's will? And was it not the suffering of love? As then He loved our poor humanity, it could not be without joy that He suffered for its sake—for its salvation. He enjoyed beforehand the effects of the travail of His soul, and we doubt not that when just before expiring on the shameful tree, He cried, "It is finished," He experienced an exceeding joy, for the condemnation was effaced, sin vanquished, and God satisfied! Christ had good reason then to say to His disciples, "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you." It was the perfect joy of perfect love.

Humility, obedience, compassion, devotion, self-sacrifice, and joy in that sacrifice, all these different features of love, such as should be manifested here below, appear then in Jesus Christ. And if we find in Him any other virtue to adore, it results ultimately from love. His love is the bond of all His perfections. They proceed from this common foundation, it is this which constitutes their unity in their diversity. If

He was gentle as a lamb led dumb to the slaughter, and at the same time strong and awful, the secret of the gentleness and of the strength is in His love. Nothing is more gentle than love, and nothing more invincible—it is stronger than death. It seeks nothing for itself; it cares not for suffering, and is indifferent to shame. It seeks neither its own glory nor its own interest. When made to pass through the most terrible trial it only comes out more burning and more pure. Thus does love explain all the contrasts in the life of Christ. He has shown us what love is; and as holiness cannot be separated from love, we may conclude from these considerations that the life of Jesus was the life of God in humanity.

Is there in all this assembly one who rejects this conclusion? Is it possible? Are there, then, two human consciences? What is wanting to induce you to adore Christ? Are you not disabused regarding the hypocritical virtues that sound a trumpet before them? Are you not weary of the false heroism, the noisy show, which it is but too easy to sound? Humble holiness—true holiness, without parade and without pretence, does not this speak far better to your heart? Do you not feel that there is something incomparable in the life and death of Christ, something so pure, so grand, so divine, so ideally beautiful, that you must either close your eyes that you may not behold Him, or else fall at His feet? Forget our feeble words, and place yourselves before His cross—go to it even with the prejudices that have been attributed to you. They cannot be more narrow or more strong than those of the pagan centurion who presided at His execution. Only imitate this man: he contemplated for a few moments the holy victim, and then he smote on his

breast ; he was a Christian. Such gentleness, such calmness, in the midst of such sufferings ! Words of pardon for his enemies ! No, it is not a man ; or, if it be, the man is a God. Do you also forget your part, your vocation as philosopher, disputer, scoffer ? Contemplate Jesus dying. One hour of earnestness, with the cross before your eyes. We ask nothing more ! We know that unless you command your conscience to silence, it will repeat the cry of the centurion, and, if it spoke not, the very stones would cry out : Yes, this man was a God.

How precious is it to us Christians to have in Thee, O my Saviour, even in this sad world of sin and degradation, the type of all that is good and beautiful ! What comfort for the soul, chafed by finding so much that is wretched and mean even in the best of men, to rest adoringly on Thee ! What joy, after some painful discovery, some deception of the heart, to fix a long look on Thee, well assured that we can never be deceived in the Holiest of all ! What a blessing to be able to say : This perfection of my Saviour, far from tempting me to despair, should inspire in me a sweeter confidence, for it is the very principle of my salvation, the guarantee of my reconciliation with God, as well as the law of my conscience, and in a blessed eternity it will be fully communicated to myself : “ We shall be like Him,” says Saint John, “ for we shall see Him as He is ! ” What a hope is this, my brethren ; and how should we not say with the same apostle : “ Let every man that hath this hope purify himself, even as He is pure ! ”

VIII.

JESUS CHRIST A PROPHET.

Discourse First.

THE TEACHING OF JESUS CHRIST.

“Never man spake like this man.”—JOHN vii. 46.

HAVING considered the nature, the plan, and the holiness of the Redeemer, having inquired what He was, what He designed to do, and in what spirit He accomplished His work, it remains for us now to unfold before your eyes the work itself, in order that you may appreciate its unity and its grandeur. It is customary to divide this work into three parts, corresponding to the three great institutions of the ancient dispensations, which are prophecy, priesthood, and kingship. Christ is regarded first as a prophet, then as a priest, and finally as a king. We accept this division of the great subject; it rests on an important truth, viz., the profound harmony between the old and the new covenants. The former expressed by all its institutions the desire of salvation. The latter fully realized that desire. The Redeemer is the link between the one and the other; and all that brings out this character of His mission tends to promote His glory. This triple arrangement of His work is not, then, one of those arbitrary and scholastic divisions,

that parcel out truth and take from its living^c reality as well as from its unity. The Word required first to manifest Himself to the world, to reveal Himself by speech—hence His prophetic mission. He needed to offer the sacrifice of redemption—hence His sacerdotal office. And in this sacrifice He must triumph over sin and death—hence His royalty. We cannot separate in Him the prophet from the sacrifice, nor the sacrifice from the king. If He was only a prophet He has not completed the cycle of the precursors of the Messiah. If He was only a sacrifice, if His sacrifice resulted not in kingship, it was without efficacy. And if He was only a king, then condemnation rests still upon the race of Adam. As Bossuet has grandly said, it was in His blood that He had to find His crown. We shall consider then, in succession, these three portions of the work of Christ; and at present we shall confine ourselves to the prophetic mission of the Messiah, of which we must proceed first to show the necessity.

The vocation of the prophet under the ancient dispensation was not restricted to prophecy, strictly so called; the prophet was the great witness of the truth, the revealer of God. It was in this sense that Jesus Christ was a prophet. If He had not conveyed in positive instructions the profound meaning of His work, that work would not have been understood. For we may say that in every important fact there is both a soul and a body. The body is the fact taken in itself, separately—the soul is its meaning, its bearing, its spirit. The body, the flesh, the covering of the fact is of little value. It is the spirit that is important. Now, the teaching of Christ alone could bring out the spirit, the soul, the profound meaning of the great event. The crucifixion of an innocent

man was nothing so new or strange in the ancient world. To see in this a redemption, it was necessary that the eye should pierce through the external veil, and to enable this, I again repeat, the teaching of Christ was necessary.

This teaching, I need scarcely say, is as admirable as is the person of the Redeemer. It presents the same contrasts, the same grandeur in humility, the same depth in simplicity. It is the only teaching that is truly fruitful, always new, always inexhaustible. The Church, during eighteen centuries, has been bending over this word of the Master, over those pages which have preserved it for us, with an ardent desire to penetrate its depths, to grasp its ultimate meaning. Men of the finest genius and the greatest holiness have meditated on it, but it has ever proved above and beyond them. Systems have been constructed and formularies arranged, and it has sometimes been thought that these have comprised the divine teaching—but it has broken and consumed them all by turns. And yet these lessons so rich, so infinite, are far more simple than the imperfect representations that have been given us of them. The wisest and most pious theology inheriting the labours of centuries cannot exhaust them, while the humblest believer, the little child himself, on hearing them from the Master's lips is arrested and touched by them! Why do men interpose so often between us and the divine Teacher? Why do the most independent spirits so frequently shew themselves servile in this respect, accepting as the teaching of Christ what is only its pitiful disguise? How rare are those who have really heard the Master speak for Himself, and have not contented themselves with certain ecclesiastical or theological traditions! It is a fact that the

greater part of men have only read a translation of the Gospel,—speaking not of words but of ideas. The Gospel comes to us constantly translated, weakened, transformed by human theology. And it is for want of going up to the original, for want of reading it in good faith, simply, and not through particular doctrines, which diminish and transform it, that so many serious men in the present day still reject Christianity. They imagine that they have refused it with full cognizance of its nature, while all the time they have not had a glimpse of its divine beauty. Would to God that we could put an end in the case of many to this wretched misunderstanding, by presenting to them faithfully the teaching of Christ! This subject contains also precious instruction for you who are Christians. You are required to honour the Gospel by your testimony. You are called then to teach like Christ. Learn from Him how to be a perfect witness to the Gospel—learn wherein lies the nerve of Christian speech, and how, in the most different relations, whether required to condemn or to console, to oppose or to persuade, to soften or to shake, the truth may be served in a way that shall be efficacious and worthy of itself.

“Never man spake like this man.” Hear what was said of Christ by His enemies themselves. Nothing could be a better proof that His teaching was as perfect as His life. We shall consider this teaching in its object and in its form, and shall shew you that in this double point of view, no man has ever taught, has ever spoken like Jesus Christ.

There is a primary sense in which Christ taught as never man taught. His instruction may be distinguished from that of all others by the fact that He was Himself its object. A master or teacher, even the greatest pos-

sible, conveys the truth but is not that truth himself. He shows the way to it, he proves its efficacy. Christ alone could say: "I am the way, the truth, and the life." This is one of the strangest sayings that ever issued from His lips, one of the most mysterious, and at the same time one of the most characteristic. They understand nothing of Christianity who seek in Christ's instructions for anything but Christ Himself, and ask from Him a single truth or doctrine of which He shall not be the substance but only the witness. I know well that this identification of Christianity with Christ has been sometimes abused, and employed to reduce the Gospel to a weak sentimentalism, an enervating mysticism, and to oppose a precise and positive expression of the law. But everything depends on the manner in which we regard the Saviour. If we have but vague ideas of His person, if we see in His divinity merely a simple ideal of human nature, if we reject His redeeming work, we may in vain pretend to found all upon Him, we shall be building on a cloud and not truly upon Christ. We fully recognize that the name of Christ may be lavishly used by those who are unconsciously working against Him. It is not enough to feel towards Him a certain attraction of the heart. This may exist without a true faith, for it may be so mixed up and confused as to bear no resemblance to a firm belief. The apostles experienced this attraction even before understanding the work of their Master, before being converted. Saint John, leaning on the breast of Jesus during the solemn feast of the Passover, felt it in the highest degree, and yet at that very hour he had not an adequate, enlightened, and enduring faith. It was a precious beginning, it was the starting-point of a strong and living faith, but it was nothing

more. It would be dangerous, then, to assert in too general a way that a relation to Christ constitutes the whole of religion. We should clearly understand and express that this relation must not consist in a simple attraction, but that it involves the conscious acceptance of the truth that is in Christ.

With this reservation we maintain that the whole of Christianity is in Christ—that there is not a doctrine that is not in Himself. His person, that is all our doctrine. Neither Christ nor His apostles taught any other. The apostolic teaching was nothing more than the reproduction of that of Christ, or an inspired commentary thereon, and the teaching of Christ had no other object than Himself. Christianity is indeed not primarily either a doctrine or a book—it is a fact, or rather it is a person. This sacred person is only known through the inspired book, the doctrine is His impress on the reason; but before the book and before the doctrine there exists the living reality. Without apostolic testimony it is not possible to know Christ, without doctrine we cannot attain to clearness of faith. The apostolic testimony and the doctrine are in our view indispensable,—we look on them as the sacred vase that contains the divine treasure. But the treasure is not the vase, and the vase is not the treasure—that which contains is not that which is contained. Christianity is not essentially a compound of holy oracles, a divine theology or a system of doctrine. Or if it be a theology it is not so after the manner of man but of God;—the theology of man is a laboured chain of ideas and words about God—the theology of God is His own word about Himself, a living, acting word, the Word incarnate. “Great,” said Saint Paul, “is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the

flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.”¹ Such is divine theology; and this it is which gave Christ a right to declare: “I am the truth!”

Let a single truth be shown us which does not connect itself in the most natural manner with this living truth! The two terms of the religious problem are God and man. To know them, to know their true relations, this is the whole of religious truth. “Shew us the Father,” said an apostle to Christ; and the Master responded, “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.” All that we can know of God Christ has taught us, or rather has shown us. The Father was in Him. All the perfections of God, His justice, holiness, and power, shone in His person with softened rays, and His love had never known a more sublime manifestation. The Son repeated also the works of the Father: the creation of the world and the whole course of divine revelations are ascribed to Him as pre-eminently the organ of omnipotence. In the same way all that we need to know concerning man, his true nature and his high destiny, we see in Him who was the perfect man. He not only teaches us again to know both God and man, but also reveals to us their true relations. Is He not the Mediator between humanity and its Creator? On the one hand, by the very fact of His mediation He manifests the fall of man and his inability to save himself; while on the other He teaches to the world the love of the Father, which led Him to give His Son, that whosoever believed in Him might not perish, but have everlasting life. What can we know concerning the

¹ 1 Tim. iii. 16.

work of salvation that is not bound up in the person of Christ? He is made unto us, says the apostle, wisdom, justification, sanctification, and redemption. To select one feature of this statement especially, do we not see that Christian morality, through sanctification, may be entirely referred to Him? And as to what concerns the future, does not all depend upon Christ? Is it not He who shall raise the dead, judge the world with righteousness, and introduce His own to glory? Is it not He, finally, who has promised and bestowed the Holy Spirit? Sin, grace, redemption, holiness, resurrection, judgment,—have all these divine doctrines any meaning unconnected with Christ? Are we not justified in saying with Saint Paul: “I desire to know nothing but Jesus Christ and Him crucified?” with Saint John: “He that hath the Son hath life?” and with the Son Himself: “Who-soever believeth in Him shall not perish?” We must not only believe what He teaches, but also believe in Himself. His teaching is, after all, only the express image of His person, as He is the express image of the Father. Let us beware of withering up this living teaching by our abstractions. Let us fear lest, through our fault, the living water be transformed into ice, and become like cold crystal, with its forms fixed and symmetrically carved! Let us remember that every doctrine, if separated from Christ, is thereby smitten with barrenness, and that the christian teaching, which is not a communication of Christ, loses its proper character, and is nothing but human philosophy. Let us not, by a new kind of scholasticism, give stones instead of bread to famishing souls, forgetting that what truly nourishes now, as it did eighteen centuries ago, is the living bread which

comes down from heaven. Never man spake like this man, then, because never could man present himself as the truth in person.

The incomparable excellence of Christ's teaching results also from its perfect form. And in what does this perfection consist? Words are the revelation of the soul, expressing all its different sentiments. They would be truly perfect, then, if they were a pure mirror of our thoughts and impressions, or rather an exact reflection of the ray that projected them. We can demand nothing better of a revelation than that it reproduce completely the hidden things with which it professes to make us acquainted. A word with regard to God, is an eternal reproduction of His being, an express image of His person, and therefore perfect like all that comes from Him. The perfection of human words should be measured by the fidelity with which they manifest the human soul. I say the soul, because the thoughts are not the most important matter. It is possible that a man may be endowed with the precious faculty of conveying his ideas with eloquence, of giving to them a beautiful, pure, transparent form, and yet that his words may be after all but a brilliant lie. This is because the centre of man's life is not in the reason but in the heart. If our words be not in harmony with our moral state, whatever may be their beauty, they are false,—like false money; they are hollow, so to speak. Not only are they lying and hypocritical, but they have no value, and in reality no influence. Men very soon perceive, without well knowing why, that they are wanting in earnestness. Thanks to God, grand words are quickly worn through. They are but a light veil that the slightest wind lifts or tears. There is nothing

truly powerful but sincerity. Perfectly sincere words are perfect words, and they are only so when it can be said: As are the words, so is the life. Then each word reaches us filled and penetrated with an inward strength. It is not an empty sign, but a reality. Even if wanting in elegance and harmony it will still make its way. Coming from the heart, it speaks to the heart.

If this be true, my brethren, if sincerity be the seal of perfection for human words, it is easy for us to justify our text: "Never man spake like this man," for never was man sincere like Christ; by which we mean that never did the words of a man so completely accord with His life. Jesus Christ lived His words and spoke His life. To say that His words were sincere is to say too little; for there was a positive identity between His actions and His discourses. His instructions depict Him before our eyes as plainly as His works. To prove to you the excellence and perfection of these instructions we shall have then to bring out the identity between the words and the life of Christ. His life was the perfect life of love; and we will make it evident that His words, in like manner, were the perfect language of divine love.

We have seen, in our last discourse, that the love of the Saviour rested on His humility. Now, His words were as humble as His life. Never man spake like this man in respect to humility. Compare the divine Master with the teachers of His day. They either assumed a tone of despotic authority, or else enveloped themselves in a pompous solemnity. They spoke, we are told, from the seat of Moses, and we fancy that we see them elevated on this seat, keeping

the subject people at their feet, imposing upon them their own interpretations, and regarding themselves as the inflexible guardians of tradition. They spoke of God only in sacred places and under consecrated forms. Their teaching was like their persons. As they sought to inspire respect by their long robes and their phylacteries, so did they endeavour to impress on their words a sovereign dignity. These also dragged after them a sacerdotal robe, and sounded like the voice of the temple itself. What a contrast between these proud doctors and the humble Teacher of Nazareth ! He sat not on the benches of any Jewish school. He had not the credit of those official titles which always cast brightness on such as are invested with them. He came from Galilee, the most despised of places ; He spoke not from the seat of Moses, but in the streets and crossways, by the side of wells, on the mountain, or by the lake, wherever the multitudes might crowd. His teaching had not the majesty of secular tradition. He imposed it on no one ; He rendered homage to truth without exercising compulsion of any kind, without using those accents of command which often of themselves exert so much influence upon souls. What could be more simple than His words ? They were free from all solemn form. His profoundest teachings arose from the most ordinary incidents of daily life, and were marked by an undisguised familiarity. We may venture to say that no doctor ever taught more completely in the style of a *layman* than Christ ; so that the very name of doctor was not applied to Him. He spoke as a friend to his friends, as a mother to her son, in words brief and telling. Neither will you find in Him the elegance and logic of the teachers of Greece any more than

the solemnity of those of Judea. Socrates and Plato taught with the most exquisite art. Not having the magisterial authority of the scribes of Jerusalem, they supplied its place by the harmony and beauty of their language, the brilliancy of their imagery, and that logical chain of thoughts, the severest charm of which is keenly felt by the intellect. There is nothing like this in the discourses of Christ. To say of Him that He was eloquent would be to offend our Christian feelings. All pre-occupation with form and external beauty is entirely absent from His words. "He did not cry, nor lift up, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street."¹ He aimed not at effect in any sense. We may say of His instruction what the prophet said of His person: "It had neither form nor comeliness."

The simplicity of Christ's words is exactly that which constitutes their perfection. The organ of eternal truth, He did not wish, in order to justify this title, that His teaching should be set off by external authority, sacerdotal solemnity, or artistic beauty. By resting on external authority, He would have confessed that His doctrine needed foreign aid for its triumph; by enveloping it in solemn forms, He would have suggested a doubt of its intrinsic value; by seeking for it artistic beauty and clothing it with a splendid veil, He would have led to the idea that it had not sufficient attraction to win souls. No; it was not fitting that the truth of God should enter the world disguised and embellished, ready to smite those whom its borrowed beauty should not fascinate. Christ knew that nothing is so beautiful or so powerful as this divine truth, and He wished that it should appear alone in His teaching. He put no authority, no

¹ Isaiah xlii. 2.

solemnity of language, no forms of oratory between us and truth. It shines in His instructions in its native and immortal beauty.

After all, what can be compared with the words of Christ? In spite of their simplicity do they not excel all others? You find not indeed in them the brilliant traits of Hebrew prophecy, that splendour of imagery, that lyrical sublimity which strikes us in Isaiah and Jeremiah. But this difference belongs to the very perfection of Christ. Everything is equal in His discourses as in His life; grand verbal agitations imply the excitement, the rapture of a spirit that is beyond itself. He was never beyond Himself; it was enough for Him to be Himself;—hence those calm, profound words, marked with an august serenity, compressing into a single saying a whole world of ideas and feelings;—hence the supreme self-possession of His thought, the unique, indefinable character of His discourses which causes us to say as we listen, “It is the Master!”

But Christ had also another motive for not imitating the doctors of His time. To speak from above is to speak from afar. It might be supposed that one would be better heard by being placed at a great distance from one’s hearers, and commanding them. But this is a great error. The more simple your words, the more strong they will be; and the more strong, the more sympathetic and appropriate to the wants of your hearers. In proportion as you are raised in the professor’s chair, in that proportion you are removed to a distance from souls. Each new step gained increases the space between you and them; your teaching becomes general, abstract, pompous, and without application. Your darts, shot from afar, touch no

individual. It is easy, then, to understand how Christ should have left the seat of Moses to the frigid doctors who had nothing to say to poor sinners. He who had a word of eternal life to bring to them,—He would never mount to that seat. He spoke to men mouth to mouth, heart to heart, and He was heard by them. And let it be well understood that, if the Christian testimony is so often robbed of its primitive force, it is because it has been placed anew upon that fatal height, in a sense between heaven and earth. All conceivable methods have been employed to shew clearly that it has an exceptional character. The very symbols have been used that are most adapted to cherish this miserable prejudice in the minds of Christian people. The witness to the truth has been wrapped in a solemn dress for worship, as if to invite him to envelop his instructions in a similar vestment. Academic language has superseded the manly and telling accents of strong conviction. From the cold heights of religious discourse to the soul of the listeners, the distance has become so great that the Christian sentiments, issuing warm, perhaps, from the orator's mind, have had time to grow cold again. Let the preacher renounce for ever that elevation which isolates him thus; let him imitate the Saviour; let him speak rather than preach; let him be felt to be a companion in conflict and in suffering instead of a master and professor. For him as for Jesus Christ, the secret of power is in simplicity. And when I speak of simplicity I do not mean negligence. A true and noble simplicity is obtained at the price of greater labour of thought and soul, and more concentrated meditation than is required for brilliancy of style. It is more difficult to convey the fundamental substance

of Christianity than it is to multiply forms of oratory. In this respect as in all others, let us be the disciples of Christ,—learning from Him the humility of the Christian testimony, which is the pledge of its real authority. Let us tear up our phylacteries as we think of so many souls needing true consolation; let us cease to speak in foreign tongues, and descend for ever from the seat of Moses, or in other words, abandon our cold solemnity and our priestly eloquence.

These reflections bring us naturally to consider the teaching of Christ, with regard not only to its humility but also to its love. These two points are closely connected, as we have recognized in speaking of the holiness of the Saviour. Humility is the beginning or the condition of love. Christ's teaching was full of love, because it was full of humility. We have established in our last discourse that His love was especially characterized by mercy, which is love to the unfortunate, the feeble, and the poor. The poor and the feeble, in respect of instruction, are uncultivated, rough, and simple men, the men of the people. The merciful character of Christ's teaching is evinced by its popularity. It was admirably suited to the wants of the many, to the necessities of the simple and the ignorant. The considerations which we have already presented to you on the teaching of Christ would of themselves suffice to establish its eminently popular character. Is it not evident that a doctrine which ends in a divine history, and every dogma of which rests upon a fact, will be much more popular than a scientifically organized system? The simple require to say: Our eyes have seen, our hands have touched the truth. Truth, living and incarnate, can alone arrest and win

them. On the other hand, words that are humble without ostentation, and free from solemnity of form, have more power and authority than any others, even over cultivated auditors; with how much greater reason over the ignorant and poor in spirit! All other teaching would be inaccessible to them. The popularity of Christ's words resulted, then, from their humility.

This popularity was, however, caused in part by the fact that Christ never admitted that distinction between the profane and the initiated which is always found in the religions of antiquity, and in human systems of philosophy. It is well known that the Greek philosophers had two circles of auditors;—the uninitiated, to whom they communicated only the external side of their system, and the initiated, to whom they revealed the inner depths of their thoughts. This aristocracy of intellect was thought much of in antiquity, but there is no parallel to it in the school of Christ. All who wish to hear Him, who desire to become His disciples, are equally welcome, and to all He reveals the whole truth. They only remain without who voluntarily exclude themselves, but whoever draws near to Christ becomes His disciple—the most rough untutored man of the people is admitted to the same title as the man of greatest intelligence. The gentle Master takes him by the hand to lead him into the sanctuary, or, if necessary, bears him thither in his arms as a little child is carried who knows not how to walk. Christ taught in open daylight, without calculation and without reserve. The doctrine that He instilled is not the monopoly of a single caste, but is offered alike to all. He concealed nothing because He had nothing to conceal. He intrusted no secret to His disciples; whatever He told them He wished

that they should proclaim upon the housetops, because it was needful that all should be known. To pretend that certain men alone are initiated into the deepest mysteries of the gospel, to the exclusion of the so-called profane mass of Christian people, is to overthrow the Christian dispensation, and to give rise to the thought that the gospel fears the light. Greece kept its mysteries in the shade, and it did well so to do. Christ had nothing to withhold from the attention of any, and therefore he spoke openly.

And not only did Christ recognize no distinction between the profane and the initiated, but He even gave special thought to those who were called the profane in ancient philosophy; that is to say, to the ignorant and the simple. Not that He rejected the enlightened, but He knew that the deepest wants of our nature are found with greatest freshness among those who have not been able to stifle them by the refinements of civilization. To satisfy the soul of the simple and the ignorant is to satisfy the human soul itself; that which arrests, touches, convinces such a soul, is certainly appropriate to the wants of all. A doctrine which suits the poor is a universal truth, while one that should please the rich and the learned might be only a passing fantasy of the mind. Christ could speak then to the people without fear of restricting His mission. And who has ever spoken to them like the Saviour? Who has better known the way to their heart? Who has ever represented truth under a form more clear and more attractive.

We beg you to observe that in bringing the truth to the feeblest reason, in such a manner that it should be able to grasp it, Christ took nothing from the truth, nor subjected it to any alteration. It is very

easy to gain the goodwill of men if we flatter their errors and their prejudices, but popularity purchased at such a price is treason against the cause of God. Christ never employed this detestible system of accommodation which pretends to place evil at the service of good. No, no ; He did not seek to insinuate truth into the heart of man as a traitor is slipped into a besieged place under a false name and a disguise. He showed us by His example that the means we employ should always be worthy of the end pursued, that pious frauds contain the worst of impieties, and that truth can no more be served by a lie than light can be produced by darkness. The most absolute fidelity in spiritual things is alone blessed of God. Any subterfuge, or even a too calculating cleverness, is offensive to Him ; the only policy of the Christian consists in having none at all. Nothing disconcerts cunning adversaries like a perfect simplicity, because it has not entered into their expectations, but surprises them as something quite unlooked for. Integrity is so inherent in Christianity that the world itself has understood the fact, so that when it has seen the pretended disciples of Christ trying to serve Him by the crooked methods of human policy, it has manifested as lively an indignation as if it had been the first time that fraud had appeared upon the earth. And this is because fraud, pretending to take shelter under the name of Jesus, is so great a monstrosity as to shock even the least enlightened conscience.

If the divine Master then rejected all accommodation, we can only explain the popularity of His teaching by the form which he gave to it. He ever found means to connect the truth with some feeling, some idea, or some fact in harmony with itself. With a skilful and

delicate hand He grafted it on the soul of His hearers, discerning with His penetrating eye where was the right point of contact. It was enough for the dove from the ark to find one green branch appearing above the waters on which it could rest ; and so was it enough for the eternal truth that was in Christ to find a single point of support in the soul or spirit of man by means of which it could enter and establish itself therein. In the midst of the ruins accumulated by the fall, the Saviour knew how to recognize at the first glance upon what stone He could rebuild the fallen edifice. It was thus that He made constant appeals to conscience, to the conviction of sin, to the need of deliverance, to the sorrow and suffering that are inseparable from human life. Think of the opening of His sermon on the mount ! “Blessed are the poor. Blessed are they that mourn. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness !” Conscious poverty, a sorrow for sinfulness, a thirst for salvation, were found in every upright and humble soul, and from these did Christ set out to raise it by degrees to the highest summits of His doctrine.

Nor was He contented to rest on these general dispositions, more or less common to all men of good purpose. He knew what was wanted by every one of them ; He addressed to each the precise teaching that was made for him. Go through the narrative of our four Gospels, recall to your minds the numerous persons who conversed with the Saviour. They belong to all classes ; to every position. Now they are members of the sovereign council of the nation, like Nicodemus ; again, they are fishermen from the lake of Nazareth ; then poor women—sometimes Pagans, sometimes Jews. You will not find a single word

that is not the most affecting, the most striking that could have been pronounced under existing circumstances. We may say, even, that the teaching of Christ takes different shades of colouring according to the vocation or pre-occupation of His companions, or even to the circumstances of the moment. Is he speaking to the poor fishermen of the lake of Nazareth, He employs an image borrowed from their condition: "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." Is He addressing a doctor of the law, He makes constant allusion to His dignity. He humbles him indeed in a profitable manner by its means: "Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?" Is He speaking to a great multitude that He has just satisfied with food, He discourses of that bread which endureth unto everlasting life. Does He meet a Samaritan woman by Jacob's well in the heat of the day, He tells her of water springing up unto eternal life, and comes gradually to address to her conscience a most serious appeal.

Was it not with the same design that Christ multiplied His admirable parables? The parable contained the sublimest teaching within the most simple narrative, borrowed from nature or from everyday life: it lifted the soul step by step to the eternal laws of God's kingdom. Just as God, under the ancient dispensation, according to the familiar and touching image of the prophet Isaiah, guided His people gently as a beast is led that goeth down into the valley,¹ so Jesus Christ guided his hearers gently over the steep and rugged heights of truth by means of His parables. The sower going forth to sow his seed, the grain of mustard seed deposited in the ground, the leaven put

¹ Isa. lxiii. 14.

into the meal, the different fruits of good and evil trees, the union of the vine and the branches, all became transparent symbols for His divinest instructions. None of His hearers, after listening to Him, could look on the external world without to some extent reading His doctrines there afresh. Nature shewed them forth, written in characters too striking to be forgotten, and thus instead of turning away souls from truth, she led them back thither continually. The parables, which were strictly narratives, produced the same effect. On seeing a flock of sheep, must not the remembrance have arisen of the Good Shepherd who giveth His life for His sheep? How should a father pressing his children to his breast, not think of the prodigal son and his forgiveness? Men working in a field or vineyard recalled the parable of the labourers hired at different hours of the day. Men's thoughts might rise to God from the commonest incidents of life, and there was nothing, even to the relations of debtors and creditors, that was not transformed into some sublime type.

No, never man spake like this man, because never man loved our poor humanity like Christ. Let us not mistake; it was His love that inspired in Him these parables,—it was His love for souls that made Him discover so admirably the spiritual nourishment needed by each one. When love fills not the heart of a witness for the truth, he restricts himself to teaching it with fidelity, without striving to render it accessible to his brethren, or carefully inquiring what are their dispositions and their spiritual necessities. Is not this one cause of the little effect of our sermons? Are they not too general—wanting in direct applications? When our divine Saviour, rich in all the

truth of God, is seen striving to present it under the form most appropriate to His different auditors, we can understand that the partial truth of which we are the depositaries has but little chance of winning hearts so long as we present it dry and bare, and shew not the tender solicitude of love to discover the secret wounds of our brethren, and to pour into them evangelical consolation.

The teaching of Christ was full of love also in another sense. It was essentially creative and fertilizing to the minds of His hearers. A master or teacher not impelled by love to souls, but by the desire to rule and constrain them, is satisfied when they yield themselves up passively to be modelled by him. He does not willingly tolerate spontaneousness of thought in his disciples. He wishes to make them captives to adorn his triumph, and he carefully retains them in the chains of his system. But such was not the method of Christ. He did not arrange his doctrines like a catechism. It would have been easy for Him to do so, and to obtain from His followers the most scrupulous adherence to the letter of His instructions. But He pursued a far higher object. He wished that His doctrine should penetrate within them, that they should acquire a profound understanding of it. Therefore did He constantly appeal to their moral powers. He did not communicate to them all the truth at once, but gave them a glimpse of the precious mine, and caused specimens of the pure gold to glitter above ground, not discovering to them the whole, that they might dig and search with persevering labour. The parables went no farther than this—they gave no more than a glimpse of the treasure, and those who had not eyes to see were contented,

and passed on. But those who had a sincere love for truth hastened to penetrate within the soil, and soon discovered unexpected riches, while the very efforts they had made for their attainment only rendered them infinitely more precious.

These considerations furnish us with a plausible explanation of that difficult passage in the Gospel in which the Lord declares to His disciples that He speaks in parables, in order that the mass of His auditors "seeing may not see, and hearing may not understand." Idle souls that feel no desire for truth have no right to its possession. So long as they retain this disposition the truth conceals itself from them, because they deserve to be punished for their passive indolence, and their shameful indifference to the most precious blessing. If the truth were communicated to them with all its evidence it would avail them nothing. It would be like a pearl cast before swine. The pearl is shown them from afar, that they may be impelled to seek it; and they have only themselves to blame if they acquire it not, since it is offered to them as to others. Whoever, on seeing it afar off, sets himself to its acquisition, is certain to succeed. He will obtain it when he shall have sold his field; that is to say, when he shall have subordinated everything to the search. It is a thousand times better that it should not have been given him without the need of labour and effort, for the sacrifices that he has made have revealed to him its true value. He now knows what it is that he possesses, and enjoys it all the more in proportion to the pains he has taken in its acquisition.

Jesus Christ deposited His words in the souls of His disciples, as so many living germs that should

grow therein. At first the instructions were completely beyond them. Often, indeed, by their strange and paradoxical character they entered into the minds of the hearers like sharp steel into the flesh. More than once they had need to cry, "This is a hard saying, who can hear it?" But it was exactly the hard and offending quality of the teaching that fixed and buried it in the depths of the heart like an arrow. The time would come when all that their Master had told them should return to their memory illumined, as it were, with a new brightness; and it would then appear, that a certain saying, which had at first given rise to violent opposition, had insensibly become, by its secret virtue, under the continuous action of the Holy Spirit, the expression of their most cherished convictions.

Jesus Christ did not hurry or precipitate anything in the communication of the truth. Bringing to the world the new covenant, He ceased not to be a faithful observer of the old; He only hinted indirectly at the abrogation of Mosaism. As He himself said, He did not wish to put new wine into old bottles, but rather by degrees to prepare the new bottles and pour the new wine into them drop by drop. He did not treat the mind and soul of man like an earthen vessel, into which the most precious things might be put at any moment. He wished that there should be a kind of harmony between the vessel and the treasure. He did not regard the living organs of revelation as a parchment on which He might write at once His whole thought. No; He waited patiently till these poor fishermen of Galilee should become mature in His school, and should be developed and spiritualized by association with Him. With what gentleness did

He not endure their slowness of understanding and weakness of faith! With what indulgence did He not explain to them His simplest parables! With what love did He not rectify their mistakes! When we think of the suffering that He must have experienced in finding day by day new proofs of the grossness of their spirit and the materialism of their piety, we recognize in His patience one of the most touching manifestations of His love, especially by comparing it with the impatience which we ourselves evince when we encounter prejudice or error.

Finally, brethren,—and I conclude with that which is most obvious,—the words of Christ were the expression of perfect love, because never was there addressed to man language so consoling as His. His words were the ideal fulfilment of the command: “Comfort ye, comfort ye my people.” All His discourses might be summed up in this appeal: “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden.” He comforted mankind generally, speaking divinely of the Father’s love: “Whosoever believeth in me, hath everlasting life.” He comforted all the afflicted: “Blessed are they that weep,”—“theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” He comforted repenting souls, saying to each one: “Go in peace, thy sins are forgiven.” He comforted His friends, His disciples, in those last discourses, the inimitable sweetness, tender sadness, and divine depths of which no words can describe, and in which He seemed to open all His heart. Nailed to the cross, He continued to give comfort, and among His last words was an expression of love to His mother and to His own. “Never man spake like this man.”

Having reached the end of this discourse, I am yet far from having exhausted the vast subject. Christ

not only taught, He had also to combat by His words. He had to supply the vindication of His doctrine, and He has given us a model of the manner in which we should defend the truth. We shall have then to speak to you of the apology of Christ, and of His miracles, which form a part of that apology; and we shall recognize here also the character of holiness which has struck us in His teachings.

Never man spake like this man, because never man spake as He did the language of love. But it would have been in vain for Him to speak this divine language if He had not also lived the holy life of love. In the harmony between His life and His words which we have so fully pointed out to you, lay our Saviour's great strength. And is there not in this fact a very salutary and humbling lesson for us? Have we not here the secret of our miserable weakness, as opposed to the world? Look not for this secret in external circumstances, or in our deficiency of knowledge. Seek it not in the imperfect way in which we stammer the language of love. Witness for Christ, remember your daily life, your falls, your unfaithfulness, your cowardice, your selfishness! Your life is a refutation of your words, contradicting them unceasingly. Even those who have never seen you, find your testimony lacking in virtue. There is something—I know not what it is—in the soul, which enables it to discern without being clearly conscious of so doing, whether Christian words are or are not in harmony with the life of him by whom they are spoken. There are men of whose private history we are ignorant, and yet the very pressure of whose hand communicates to us something of God. Language through which there somehow flows a Christian life is immediately effica-

cious. Impotence is the punishment of mere religious talkers. And we all more or less deserve this character. The consciousness of justly merited feebleness is the great and bitter suffering belonging to the ministry of the word. If we truly lived what we preach from the pulpit,—if Thy servants, O my God! never entered it but when filled with Thyself,—if they had Christ in their heart as much as on their lips, with what virtue would not Thy word be invested! Alas! by our weakness we may estimate our inconsistencies. The bustle of living life,—flowing words of piety while the life is mean and poor,—this is the great evil of the Church in our day. But, O God, Thou knowest we mourn over it profoundly; we would not remain in this guilty inconsistency! We desire to speak less and to act more. Oh! that the example of Him who put all His holy life into His holy teaching, may convert us to that absolute sincerity which is in all times the best strength of the Church!

IX.

JESUS CHRIST A PROPHET.

Discourse Second.

THE APOLOGY OF JESUS CHRIST.

Scripture—Miracles—Internal Proof.—JOHN v. 36-45.

JESUS CHRIST instructed men, and we have shown, in our last discourse, that He did so in that perfection which belongs to Him alone. But He did not confine Himself to declaring the truth of God. He defended it also, and gave it a triumphant position in face of the strongest objections. It is important for us to have an exact and complete idea of Christ's apology. It is necessary that we should know on what basis the divine founder of the final religion has made Christian certainty to repose. This is necessary in a twofold point of view—both to secure the peace of our own mind and heart, and to teach us to present the Gospel by its most accessible side. Where is the christian who knows not the temptation of doubt? Where is the believer who has never experienced the passing of a cloud over his faith? On what unknown heights of unchangeable serenity does he dwell? We are tempted in all things—how should we not be tempted in our faith? It must be tempered by conflict; it

must reveal its internal force by clashing with ideas which are most contrary to it. Let us not ask that it should be spared the combat, for this would be to ask that it should lose its triumph; since there can be no victory without conflict and danger. Moreover, it is salutary to know ourselves vulnerable at all points, that we may apply without ceasing to the divine physician of the soul. Whatever be the weight of these considerations, it is not the less true that the Christian is often attacked by doubts, and that a dark night sometimes wraps him all at once in its chilling gloom, like those thick fogs which suddenly obscure the heavens. Nor let it be supposed that doubt is the result only of laborious and weary thoughts, and that by not agitating the great questions of christian theology, we shall be sheltered from its assaults. It is often in the happiest hours that we feel its touch; it takes pleasure in pursuing us when our soul is opened to the holiest emotions. It may be at the time of prayer; an impalpable veil may suddenly spread itself between us and God, so that our voice shall seem to fall into empty space and be unheard. It may be near a deathbed or an open grave. A horrible thought may cross our minds: Is there anything beyond? Should we not believe our eyes?—It may be again on some day of rare joy that seems a foretaste of heaven. We soon hear in that beautiful and peaceful Eden, which we are for a moment inhabiting, the hiss of the serpent. Ah, well! we require to have an immediate and triumphant response; we must know how to impose silence on the enemy, for doubt is despondency, impotence, defeat, and will soon end in a fall if it be not torn from our heart. Christ will teach us by His divine apology how we may

destroy such doubt by a word, and regain the blessed certainty of faith. Our subject concerns, then, all Christians. Let them seek in it the strength and consolation which they need ; for the hour of doubt will sound for each sooner or later.

We have then, brethren, to plead before the world the great cause of Christ. We must give an account of our faith. Christianity has never been more misunderstood than in our day. I will go farther, and say that it has never been more badly defended than it is now by certain religious parties. And this is one of the most serious perils of the Church. It is not only attacked by antichristianity, but also compromised by a false christianity. There are now unhappily men imprudent or insane enough to declare that the doctrine of Christ requires, in order to its establishment or propagation, methods of compulsion. They might as well assert that the cause of the Gospel is a lost one, since a recourse to compulsion on behalf of a doctrine is a confession of moral impotence. We do not strike except when we cannot answer, and we do not ask help from external force save when we despair of persuading. These gross and fatal modes of vindication would have already ruined Christianity had it been possible for our faults so to do. We can no longer conceal the fact that a great number of serious men have taken catholicism at its word, and imagined that it is in fact impossible to demonstrate Christian truth. We shall only bring these men back, my brethren, by proving the contrary. Never was it more necessary than now that Christians should truly form a militant host, and unitedly defend the truth of the Gospel. If they devolve this duty on a few men, who seem more directly called to it, if the vindication of Christianity

become an official function, we may regard the battle as lost: for we have reached one of those moments when, to defend the sacred soil entrusted to us, the regular army will not suffice, but when we must oppose the rising of the multitude for infidelity by a general levy on behalf of the faith. Let every Christian learn then to wield the holy weapons of christian apology, that it may be well understood that the ground which it best becomes us to take up is that of free persuasion, and that it is unjust to let Christianity suffer from the cowardly discouragement afforded by the advocates of religious persecution!

I may perhaps have a hearer who regards not without alarm the attempt to demonstrate the truth of the Gospel. Too often is a certain kind of scepticism concealed under an appearance of faith, and it is thought that our belief is more securely based in proportion as our intellect is more incurably darkened. The saying of Saint Paul regarding the foolishness of the cross will no doubt be brought forward against us; but we will reply that we fully accept this foolishness of the cross—we know that revelation is not received through a syllogism, but though it be foolishness in this point of view, it is not the less the wisdom of God; and if so, it follows that it can be demonstrated to that extent in which anything of God has been preserved in man. It is necessary to be consistent: either declare that man is no longer in any sense the offspring of God, and then cease to act a ridiculous farce by the semblance of trying to convince him, and silently expect for him a mystical illumination—or else acknowledge that in spite of the fall, there is an indestructible relation between man and God, and then try to bring his soul into contact with revelation. In other words,

say with us, that a vindication of Christianity is possible and necessary. And how should we not be persuaded of this fact, when we see the Church from age to age establishing her own claims and maintaining them against the most varying attacks, above all, when we hear the first of her apologies from the lips of the Saviour Himself? He had neither your timidity, your scruples, nor your timorous theology. He did not advocate the cowardly narrow-mindedness of certain modern evangelical Christians any more than He advocated external compulsion. He said to His contemporaries, and through them to all: Examine my teaching. He confided in the result of such an examination. He did not certainly suppose that all the world would accept His instructions, for He knew too well what impure motives often close the heart against moral evidence. But He had the consciousness that He had supplied sufficient grounds of belief for honest-hearted men. We may add that His apology was popular like His teaching, and that consequently a blind faith was required from no man.

But it is time, brethren, that we should consider this apology in itself. The text which I have chosen presents to us its essential features. The words that Saint John reports were spoken on occasion of the first discussion between the Lord and the Jews. The question in dispute was precisely that to which all Christian apology is related: Was Jesus Christ or was He not the Messiah, the Redeemer, the Son of God? This question answered, every other is settled at the same time. It is the one question; between infidelity and the Church there lies no other, or at any rate all others flow from this. Christ establishes His divine mission against His opponents by a collection of proofs which we cannot too much admire. He refers

to the testimony of Scripture: "Ye search the Scriptures, and they are they which testify of me." Then to that of His miracles: "The works that I do bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me." And, lastly, He appeals to the souls of His hearers: "How can ye believe which receive honour one of another?" These proofs we say are admirable, since they are drawn from the very nature of Christianity. Christ does not demonstrate His doctrine as one would demonstrate a simple fact of science or of history, a philosophical dogma or a mathematical problem. His proof is wonderfully appropriate to His design. He traces out and circumscribes the true ground of religious discussion. His vindication is admirable also in that it is not exclusive. He restricts Himself neither to external nor to internal evidence, but comprehends them both, neglecting no means of penetrating within the besieged place. He begins by possessing Himself of the outer enclosure by means of historical proofs, but he goes farther than this,—He enters within, and stops not till He reaches the heart of the place. He is not satisfied with rendering Himself master of the house where the strong man dwells, but He also binds and chains the man. To speak without a figure, He shakes and convinces the mind, but He considers nothing effected till He has reached the heart by His words. Scriptural proof and the evidence of miracles appear to Him necessary but insufficient, and He crowns them with that moral evidence which forces the adversary within his own entrenchments, his inner court, and changes him from a vanquished captive to a willing ally,—to a believer and a disciple. And not only so, but the moral evidence comes before us also as the necessary auxiliary to the proof from Scripture and from miracles.

Christ appealed, then, first of all to the *Scriptures*. But this kind of proof could not be employed in the same way when designed for Jews and for Gentiles. The former admitted the authority of the holy writings, and it was enough to deduce the consequences from these sacred premises; the latter did not believe in the holy oracles, and their divine character needed first to be established if any conclusion was to be drawn from them. We can conceive, then, that the Scriptural proof must have been more or less modified according to the different cases to which it was applied. Let us first consider the way in which our Lord presented it to the Jews, and this side of His apology is suited to all those who admit the revelation of the Bible as a whole. The Scriptures testify of me, said Christ. If, then, these Scriptures contain, as you believe, the word of God, is it not evident that their testimony is conclusive, and that, if it be in my favour, my divine mission is absolutely demonstrated? Go through them, then, from the first page to the last, and you will recognize that they have had me constantly in view. There is not one promise that does not concern me, one revelation of which I am not the end and fulfilment. It is written: "In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory."¹ This hope of recovery, of glory, and of happiness,—who, up to the present day, has realized it for you? It was necessary that one should come to fulfil this promise, which is essentially the promise of salvation. Behold me, then, come to accomplish it. It is written: "He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: He hath no form nor comeliness."² Have you not seen in me day by day

¹ Isa. xlv. 25.² Isa. liii. 2.

something that you have despised, and is not the shame with which you cover me the very seal of my dignity as the Messiah, since the prophets have announced it beforehand! It is written: "Behold my servant. He shall not cry. A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench: He shall bring forth judgment unto truth."¹ Who before my day has ever thus combined gentleness and holiness, judgments and compassions? It is written: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the poor; He hath sent me to bind up the broken hearted."² But around whom have the poor, the sick, and the afflicted pressed, if not around me? On whom has there rested, as on me, the Spirit of wisdom and of might promised to the Messiah? The Spirit of wisdom! This is attested by the crowds that hang on my lips to receive my words. The Spirit of might! This I attest, to use the prophet's language, by the lame man leaping as a hart, the blind regaining their sight, and the deaf hearing once more. You will read again, in a new light, the mysterious words that tell of my sufferings, when you remember that it was necessary that "the Son of Man should be lifted up." The very last of your prophets, he who brought to you a living echo of that revelation which had been hushed for so many centuries,—said he not in the name of all your prophets and seers: "This is He that was to come!" Take away my person from your Scriptures and they will have no longer any meaning, but will be like a few isolated torches, or like the dry leaves of a withered tree blown abroad by the wind. I am the bond that constitutes them a harmonious whole. They

¹ Isa. xlii. 1, 2, 3.² Isa. lxi. 1.

form as it were a chorus of divine witnesses that sing my praises, and with imposing unanimity point me out for your adoration. They are your own Scriptures that testify of me.

Such then was the Scriptural proof as presented to the Jews. And yet, notwithstanding its clearness, it was conclusive only on condition that the Scriptures were examined, their inner meaning understood, and the spiritual depths of revelation reached. The words taken alone are of no avail until one has inhaled the divine breath that they contain, the spirit by which they are animated. Men make of them whatever they please; they force them into the sense of their preconceived ideas, so long as they have not their connecting bond, their true inmost meaning. We have a sad and striking instance of this in the Jews to whom our Lord spoke. They had the divine words, or rather, I should say, they had the letters. They even counted these, lest one should be lacking, and yet they possessed not the word of God. They had its skeleton or its carcase, but they had never contemplated its real beauty. They read it without ceasing, making the temple vaults resound with its sacred sounds, and imagining that they knew it better and better each Sabbath-day, while they had never heard it in its reality. The words had vibrated in the air and then had been lost. The word of God for these hypocrites and materialists was like Christ before Herod, it was silent; for the most beautiful portions of Scripture, if read without prayer and without feeling, no longer convey the thought of God, but are mere unintelligible oracles. We may regard that absolute want of intelligibility of God's word, which is the punishment of religious indifference, as equivalent to

its silence. Moreover, what did actually happen? The scribes, who not only studied but copied the Scriptures, without neglecting one single stroke of a letter, read, as it were, across the lines, a Bible falsified in its spirit though minutely exact in its letter. They found in it their own prejudices and passions, a temporal Messiah, and a terrestrial glory. Just as the same letters may enter into the most different combinations, so did the words of the Bible serve to express the precise opposite of revelation. They drew out the text with marvellous skill, and sheltered themselves by the dead literalism as by an impenetrable buckler, from the darts of truth. They opposed the letter to the cutting edge of the word of God; and, if we may employ such a figure, blunted the sacred sword against its own scabbard to hinder it from piercing their hearts. Ah! the words no doubt are precious, nay indispensable, since without them the thoughts of God would be intangible; but, unless they are honestly examined and studied, it is very easy to turn them against Christ. Satan himself knows how to employ them; when necessary, he is the most scrupulous citer of the Scriptures. It is not enough, then, to scrutinize them as did the Jew, we must also grasp their spirit. He who does this will not see in them scattered fragments. They will no longer be for him like a sort of admirable mosaic, without unity. They will not contain merely a series of verses and paragraphs, but will form a great whole, a living organism. Of course no amount of research can fully reach the depths of Scripture; but yet it is possible to attain to that heart of the Bible whence spring the divers revelations, like so many different branches. This was done by Simeon and Zacharias, by Mary

and Elizabeth, by those few believing and upright souls that were waiting for the hope of Israel; they knew that the promise of the Saviour was the central point of the Scriptures, and their faith in Christ was identified with their faith in the word of God. Whoever will sound the sacred book as they did, will likewise discover therein the most striking authentication of the Saviour's mission.

The Scriptures are not simply a collection of prophecies; they are the very history of revelation—they contain the archives of the work of redemption in the world. To each book in the Bible there corresponds some new manifestation of the power of God; some new and important act of His mercy. It may be said that each portion of the Scriptures has inaugurated a phase of the religious history of humanity. He who penetrates into their spirit learns hence the meaning of that history. He recognizes its end and its unity, and sees not only a chain of oracles reaching up to Christ, but also facts linked to facts, and periods to periods; the whole ancient world, indeed, gravitating towards the cross of the Redeemer. This cross becomes to his eyes the pivot of history. The sufferings and struggles of the nations, and especially the trials of the people chosen to represent humanity before God, and in its own history to give the motto for universal history,—all these different events seem to him to result in the Saviour; so that were He wanting to the world, not the Scriptures merely, but forty centuries of labour, conflict, and preparation, would become altogether without meaning.

Thus, brethren, the scripture proof presented to those who admit the authority of the Scriptures is only valuable so far as these are understood; and since they

are not truly understood, or their profound meaning appreciated unless there be a desire for truth, and an honest heart in the search after it, it follows that even the scripture proof must rest on a certain correspondence of the soul with revelation, on a certain moral disposition, on sincerity and uprightness of heart: You do not believe, said the Saviour in our text, because you have not the word of God in you. A profound saying, which we should call presumptuous from any other lips than those of the Master; but which shews us that so long as the divine word remains altogether external to us, so long as it does not penetrate within our hearts by grace, it is but a vain sound that vibrates on the air, an authority apparent and illusory.

If we now consider, brethren, the use that may be made of the scriptural evidence in relation to those who do not believe in the authority of the Bible, we must confess that it will have to be presented in a different manner. The Bible is too commonly appealed to in opposing the unbelieving, as if they recognized its truth. But to do this is to wish to have a cause tried before a judge whom one of the parties does not accept. It is essential to set out from a common point of departure, otherwise we do not arrive at the same end, from not having followed the same road. It is not that scriptural proof is of no avail in the controversy with infidels, but we must not ask of the adversary at the onset that which he will not accord. Shew him in the Bible a simple collection of testimonies to the great facts of redemption, and ask him to apply to these testimonies the same methods of verification that he would apply to others. Three conditions are required of a witness before we grant

him our confidence : first, he must have seen the facts ; secondly, he must be perfectly upright and sincere ; and, finally, he must have sufficient intelligence to comprehend what he relates. Here, then, is the triple question which you must allow to the unbeliever : were the Bible witnesses the contemporaries of Christ ? were they honest men ? and were they intelligent ?

Were they contemporary with the facts that they relate ? Press the infidel on this first question ; and if he reply that the Gospel is a fiction invented long after the period to which we refer its composition, demand of him the grounds of his assertion. Ask if he has made the researches necessary to justify it ; if he has examined and weighed all the different testimonies of history ; and if he is fully warranted in refusing them. You will be confounded at his scientific agility, and his credulity in accepting in the mass the conclusions of a science no less frivolous than himself. But you will, without difficulty, bring him to confess that the denial of the authenticity of Scripture is less easy to justify than he had at first supposed. And this will be one step, one result gained that is not to be despised ; for we only demand impartiality in the examination of this question of authenticity. We do not fear that examination, for we know that in a historical point of view, nothing can be more solid or more firmly based than the Bible testimony taken as a whole. Therefore, we put far from us the popish notion that sees in the canon a fact not to be discussed, and forbids conscientious researches concerning any portion of the holy book. The desperate attempt of a theology that is at bay, this course is adapted to furnish weapons to infidelity. Thank God it is only a capricious eccentricity in the history of the Church.

It has been formally rejected by the greatest teachers in all times, from the fathers to the reformers.

After having decided the first question, let us pass to the second: Were the witnesses honest men? Press the unbeliever equally on this point. An impostor has always an interested motive for deceiving us, and where can we find such a motive for the apostles? Have they flattered us? Have they carressed human pride? Strange flatterers those, who said unanimously, "There is none righteous, no, not one." Strange flatterers, Paul and Peter, who painted human corruption in such frightful colours, and especially the corruption of their own times! Did they flatter themselves? Did they set themselves up as religious heroes? No, they rather accused themselves with true candour. Their failure to understand their Master's words, their wanderings, their falls, their early cowardice, all were confessed without reservation. The deception, again, would have been carried strangely far. A lie commonly stops at the borders of the grave, for it is useless to a man that is about to die. Earthly glory is for him vanishing like smoke, and he knows that the hour of judgment is at hand. The lie dies, therefore, on the cold lips. But if the apostles were not sincere, they lied and deceived even on the funeral pile, and under the fatal sword! Let those believe this who will, or who can! A testimony sealed with the blood of the witness, a testimony that involves a martyrdom seems to us impressed with such marks of honesty that to doubt its truth is the height of absurdity.

Once more, were these witnesses intelligent? Did they understand what they related? In our view, when revelation is in question, to be intelligent is to be

inspired ; for the Spirit alone knoweth what is in God. The question, then, comes to be this: Were these witnesses inspired? To prove their inspiration, do not lose yourselves, brethren, in long dissertations. Take advantage, certainly, of the evidence of prophecy, which proves a manifest and miraculous intervention of the Spirit of God—take advantage of the incomparable unity of books written at the most different periods, and by the most different men. Bring out their inimitable beauty under all its relations ; but there is an argument still more efficacious. Open the book, read some of its pages, you may be sure that the infidel is not truly acquainted with it ; sometimes it has not been opened, or, if opened, only carelessly looked through. Read to him, with a softened spirit, some portion of the holy book ; and if he recognize not the breath of God, if he cry not “God is here,” it is because he will not see or hear, because he refuses the light ; and, even then, your case is strong against him. You take up the fact of his incredulity, and you may shew him that on this point, as on others, it is not that he cannot, but that he will not believe. You turn a question of doctrine into a question of conscience. Thus, whether we look from their point of view, who admit the authority of the Bible, or from theirs who deny it, the scripture proof comes before us as necessarily appealing both to the heart and the conscience ; brought out in this way, it is armed with divine power.

Let us beware of weakening or compromising this proof by exaggerating it. It is compromised whenever it is made to depend on any particular theory. Faith is weakened if you say, “The evidence of Scripture has no value unless it be understood exactly as we

understand it; all is lost if you depart from our system as regards the Bible. To believe in its inspiration is not enough, you must believe as we do, or we shall not consider that you believe at all." And who are you, then, it may well be asked, thus to confiscate the writings of God, and to attach them to a theology doubtful and disputable like all that is human and not manifestly revealed from heaven? The greatest misfortune for you, and the most grievous punishment of your imprudence would be that you should be taken at your word, for then, indeed, the authority of those Scriptures that you love, though not better than we do, would be shaken! You suspend it entirely on your particular notions. But ah! the branch is too frail to bear the sacred burden! If it were true that the least question raised about a text, the slightest divergence from your own idea of inspiration, would ruin the scriptural proof, it would have been ruined long ago, and would be heard of no longer. Let us beware also of robbing it of its greatest strength by petrifying Scripture, that is to say, changing the inspired witnesses into passive organs of revelation. "God has revealed unto us these things by His Spirit. We believed, therefore have we spoken." Let us not forsake these broad data of apostolic inspiration. Once more, let us carefully avoid falsifying the evidence of Scripture by employing it in a fragmentary manner. Let us constantly go back to the Bible as a whole—searching the Scriptures to supply the requirements of Christian controversy—quoting them not like the Rabbis, but like Christians, fully persuaded that by means of isolated sayings we might as easily make war against Christ as in His favour. Let us intelligently and spiritually employ

the proof from Scripture. Let it be in our hands the sword which pierces the joints and marrow, and it will then prove for us what it has ever proved for the Church—one of the best weapons of the Christian armour !

We have dwelt thus on the evidence from Scripture because of the frequent misunderstandings of which it has been the subject. We shall touch more briefly on the two other methods of proof employed by our Lord, *i.e.*, miracles and moral evidence. “The works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me.” I have not now to prove to you the possibility or the reality of the miracles of Christ. On the former point I confine myself to remarking : Do you believe in God, that is to say, in a free and powerful God ? If so, the question of miracles presents no difficulty. You recognize that a God who is free, can intervene in creation by His power as He pleases and when He pleases, without binding Himself to the chain of natural causes and effects. The same hand that attached the first link to His throne can break the chain at any moment and form it anew at His own pleasure. As to the reality of Christ’s miracles, this follows from the sincerity of the witnesses to His holy life—the Scripture testimony establishes it in our view in an irrefragable manner. When we come to unfold to you the ministry of Christ, we shall dwell on the diversity of His miracles. Now I take these miracles for granted, and limit myself to the question : What is their value in the apology of Christ ?

And first let us well understand the nature of a miracle. It is an extraordinary fact which cannot be

explained by any natural cause, and must therefore be attributed to one that is supernatural. It is a direct intervention of God, suspending the natural law by a sovereign act. The idea of miracles is then essentially linked with that of a revelation. Pardon itself is the first miracle—it is the most difficult of all, and after it no other need surprise us. Sin having been committed, the natural course of things must have led to condemnation, absolute and universal. Pardon has interrupted this natural course; the love of God has interposed, and an unheard of event has taken place in His heart, impossible from a rational point of view. Instead of smiting down the sinner He has shewn him grace. From this first miracle flow all the others—for everything that contributes to salvation in a world of sin is miraculous, contrary, that is to say, to the natural course of things. All the revelations of God have been sovereign manifestations of His love. Particular miracles were only like radiations from the essential miracle which was the accomplishment of the work of salvation. The greatest miracle, pre-eminently the miracle, was the person of Christ, for it is in Him that the divine mercy has been fully manifested for the destruction of the fruits of sin, the natural consequences of the fall. But this miraculous character of the person and work of Christ required to be rendered visible to men by special miracles, by works that should be its evident sign;—the only design of these works being to bring men to Jesus Christ who was the incarnate miracle.

Thus, brethren, the Saviour's works had no value as evidence, save so far as they led to the discovery and discernment of His mission, and guided men to Himself. They demonstrated the fact that He was approved of

God, and invested with His power. They revealed His nature in a most impressive manner, being like brilliant reflections adapted to strike every eye. Particular miracles considered exclusively as marvels had no value in the Saviour's view. They proved nothing with certainty, for an extraordinary action may be attributed to an infernal power. Hell may have its miracles if God permit. That which is important, then, is not, so to speak, the noise made by a miracle—it is its character and its close relation to the person of Christ that lead us to recognize its sanctity. A miracle regarded in a general and abstract manner, cannot be appealed to as the sufficient guarantee of a doctrine, since in that case we might believe in a messenger from Satan as well as from God. It cannot produce faith. More than this, it hinders faith while it is thus isolated, for it only appeals to what is most external in man—it speaks simply to his sight. A belief resting upon sight alone would be the very opposite of faith, which is the sight of the invisible. A belief based on purely external miracles would be in no way superior to a belief based exclusively on reasoning. This is why Saint Paul classed together the Jew who demanded miracles and the Greek who sought after wisdom. The miracle that is nothing more than a prodigy, is not a more spiritual principle of belief than is human philosophy. In the one case as in the other, man consults only his sight, for human wisdom is the sight of the reason, while a miracle is perceived by the bodily eye. Faith rests upon the sight of the heart and the conscience. But in a miracle that is only a marvel there is nothing for the heart or the conscience to see. Christ always refused to work marvels. You will remember how

He replied to those who said, "Master, we would see a sign from Thee." "A wicked and adulterous generation," said He, "seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas." Was it possible to deprecate more strongly a search for the marvellous as a ground of belief?

The important fact, then, regarding the miracles of Christ is, that they are not simple prodigies, but that they bear the impress of His person, and are its illustration. Christ did not lavish His miracles. He did not seek to find occasion for them. He accomplished them through love; they were almost always acts of mercy, touching marks of His compassion. And it is a remarkable thing that they were only granted to faith. "Believest thou?" such was the question asked by Christ before He wrought a cure. "He could not do many mighty works there, because of their unbelief." A miracle does not dissipate incredulity; on the contrary, it has for its very condition a certain amount of faith. The unbelieving "would not be persuaded though one rose from the dead." An external miracle would excite their surprise and astonishment; but there is a wide interval between astonishment and inward persuasion. The generation contemporaneous with our Lord, witnessed His most startling miracles. They saw Lazarus raised from the dead, and yet believed not; because they stopped at the marvel, and did not discern the divine meaning of the miracle. Even the resurrection of Christ Himself has its full signification only for those who understand its momentous bearing on the work of salvation. The Jews knew that He had left the

tomb on the third day, and yet remained obstinate unbelievers.

Contemplate more closely the miracle wrought at Bethany. It will serve to characterize for us the work of Christ. The Master came thither some days after hearing of the sickness of Lazarus. Guided by Martha and Mary to the grave where their brother was buried, He groaned within Himself. It was from compassion, and from an impulse of tender love that He raised the dead to life. First of all He prayed to His Father, and showed by this prayer His perfect humility. Humility and love, were not these the very Christ Himself; and may we not say that this miracle was a brilliant ray from His own soul, as well as a fresh proof that the power of God was in Him? It possessed also, like all the Saviour's miracles, a symbolic character. It is impossible, at the sight of that open grave, and that raised man, not to think of the moral resurrection which Christ designed to accomplish. Everything in this miracle, as in all the rest, bears the mark of the spirituality and the humble love of Christ. By this splendid act, as by the other works of Christ, the Father said to men: "This is my Son, hear ye Him!" But in order to hear Him, to recognize His divine characteristics, to get beyond the external marvel, we must have ears to hear, and eyes to see, a certain religious capacity, a certain moral disposition; the miracle, like the scriptural evidence, brings us back to moral proofs. And we must now inquire how these were presented by our Lord.

The forty-fourth verse of the fifth chapter of John, sums up the moral evidence in few words: "How can ye believe, who receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?"

Let us try to understand this saying, for it contains all that is most profound and characteristic in the apology of Christ. According to Him, the great obstacle to faith among the Jews was not in their reason, but in their heart. The cause of their unbelief was not so much a doctrinal difficulty, as a moral impulse. They sought human glory, they held the views of pride and selfishness, and thus they were hindered from recognizing and accepting religious truth. Their religious sensibility was blunted; the light shone around them without affording them illumination. The practice of the good would have brought them to the discernment of the true: If any man will do the will of God, he shall know of the doctrine that it is of God. By not doing the will of God, by seeking human glory, they rendered themselves incapable of recognizing a divine revelation, even by its surest signs. At the basis of this argument lies the great thought that there is a profound affinity between the Saviour and the human conscience. If this did not exist, of what consequence in respect of religious conviction would be obedience or disobedience to the commands of conscience? As conscience would stand in no relation to Christ, the fact of its being more or less obscured would have no influence in causing us either to refuse or to accept christian doctrines. If the perversion of conscience, evinced by the selfish ambition for human glory, prevents our believing in the Saviour, we must then conclude that before being totally debased it possessed the capacity to believe in Him; and in consequence that there originally exists between Christ and the conscience a pre-established harmony. This fact, indeed, we have not now to prove; the whole of these discourses has rested on a firm belief of it. We have shewn you, in

Christ, the desire not only of the nations, but of every human soul. The religious history of humanity, which is the resounding echo of conscience, has brought us its testimony. We have seen that the heathen nations, under the grossest and often the most confused symbols, have expressed the desire for a divine Redeemer; and that they have all celebrated the worship of the unknown God, calling on Him and invoking Him in every language spoken upon earth. We have seen that every man was in fact sighing after Christ. We have heard in his heart that voice of God that said to him: "Seek ye my face." We have listened to that voice, first of all in the inward groaning, the universal complaint that we all repeat by turns, in the cry of sorrow and distress, in the supplication of condemned man who asks for a Saviour, for a sacrifice that may save him from condemnation, and expiate his sins. We have heard that voice again in our aspirations after the good, the holy, the infinite, in our fervent sighs for mercy, in that thirst for righteousness and truth which is, in fact, a thirst for God. The want of pardon, and the want of God, trouble every soul of man; and the Redeemer perfectly satisfies both the one and the other. He brings pardon, and He restores God to man. By pardon He comforts our misery—by the revelation of God He satisfies our noblest aspirations. There is then between conscience and Christ the same relation as between the famished body and the food prepared for it. A divine sensibility has been left to the conscience; it is divinely awakened in order that it may recognize in Christ the deliverer whom it was expecting and demanding, though it knew Him not.

The most powerful apology, then, will be one which, without neglecting other evidence shall devote itself especially to manifesting this relation between ourselves and Christ. This is the method that He Himself chiefly employed, and He has bequeathed it to us as that most capable of convincing men; therefore we believe that we have done more towards establishing the truth of Christianity by presenting to you the holiness of the Saviour, than we should have done by accumulating the most philosophical proofs. Every upright conscience must have recognized immediately by the light of sudden and irresistible evidence that He was the Christ, the Son of God. The apology was itself complete and unanswerable. If we consult the experience of Christians, we shall see that it concurs in our view. I appeal to your recollections. What was it that cast you down on the way to Damascus? Was it external evidence? This may perhaps have made you attentive to christianity, may have had a beneficial effect upon you, but it was not in it that you found the pricks that pierced you and against which you could not kick. It was not after a comparative study of the prophecies and the miracles that you fell on your knees before the cross. It was not at the close of a patient logical deduction that you laid down your arms. You had not leisure to weigh the arguments for and against the Gospel in the balances of your reason. A divine hero, like the great Roman general of whom history tells us, threw his sword into one of the scales—that is to say, His cutting words seized, pierced, and vanquished you before you reached the end of your syllogism. You felt all at once your own nothingness and His power, your sins and His love. A rapid flash of lightning crossed your darkness

and illuminated for you the divine figure of Christ. He appeared before you as your Saviour, you comprehended that He alone would satisfy the desire of your heart, and you cast yourself at His feet crying out : “My Lord and my God !”

Whence comes it, brethren, that the moral evidence of the Gospel is so rarely felt in this manner ? Our text explains the fact. Conscience is the inner eye—but too often we have some interest in not seeing, and we willingly close our eye. Christ is not only our Saviour, but also our example. He demands from us holiness, and this is what alarms and irritates the sinner. So long as he wishes to persevere in sin he fears to be enlightened, and therefore flies from the light ; or better still, since it is difficult to fly from the light, he voluntarily blinds himself—“Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.” The unbeliever takes measures that he may not see. The more he busies himself in sin, the more does he love and seek the darkness, and by degrees his conscience becomes wholly perverted ; so that, as the eye can only perceive the light when there is an affinity between it and the sun’s rays, so the conscience can no longer perceive truth when it has attained to an absolute discordance from it. Religious truth in its highest expression is the divine love in Jesus Christ. The man who lives but for selfishness and worldly glory, can no more comprehend the beauty of love, than the eye that has become clouded can admire the splendour of the sun. “How can ye believe, who seek honour one of another ?”

Do not then deceive yourselves, obstinate unbelievers. The source of your incredulity is in your evil heart. Speak not so loudly of the systems, the skilful theories by which you think to have superseded

the Gospel. You have done this in the same way as one supersedes the yoke of duty and the moral law. Under these grand names you hide your vices and your sins, and, above all, that inextinguishable love of human glory which devours you ! You deny the God of the Gospel because you will not renounce your idol. If we could get to the starting point of your grand notions, we should often find it very pitiful and very vile. It is Agrippa who will not give up Berenice—the man of pleasure or of ambition who will not renounce his passion, and seeks to find for it, at any cost, a plausible justification. We shall only believe in the sincerity of your opposition to Christianity when you shew us your doctrines supported by a pure, austere, and serious life ; I say more, a humble life, free from every desire of glory. Until then, we shall confound you with all those who have ever said of God and of His Christ : “ Let us break their bonds asunder, for they are too heavy for us.” The cry of rebellion rises not openly from your systems, but pervades them like a subtle yet distinct murmur. You do not wish for the morality of Christ, because it would constrain you, and therefore with much parade you reject His doctrine. Thus, while taking up the position of judges pronouncing a definitive sentence upon the Gospel, it appears in reality that it is not you that judge the Gospel, but the Gospel that unmasks you. It has manifested your corruption and your attachment to evil. If you had lived before Christianity, you might have wrapped yourselves in the philosopher’s mantle and passed for disinterested sages. But now is this mantle torn in many places. You have been constrained by your passions to take your part against the perfect revelation of the good

and the true. You have cursed the light because your eye was evil. Beware lest you go on till the inner eye be totally blinded, and a moment come when it shall be quite too late to perceive the least light of the sun. Evil, when long practised, loved, and served, ends by assimilating itself to our wholly perverted moral nature, and penetrates even to the conscience, which, weary of the conflict, gives it its sanction. Then is it no more merely the opposition of darkness to light. The usurpation of evil is consummated; it is no longer recognized as evil, for it calls itself good, and the darkness calls itself light. Now, if Christ appear, instead of being worshipped He will be called the son of Beelzebub. A frightful overthrow is this of every true notion, a total revolution of the conscience! When it has come to this, man ceases to be man, and becomes a sort of moral monster; he is a demoniac in cold blood, and this cool delirium is a thousand times worse than the most frightful madness. Nor are we drawing an imaginary picture. This state of things was seen even in the Saviour's time; and if you would not that it should be repeated in you, be sincere with yourselves, recognize the secret spring of your unbelief. I do not tell you to believe this day. It is impossible to lead into the full sunlight a man whose eye is diseased. I only say to you: Cure your diseased eye, undertake the healing of your conscience. Endeavour to do the will of God as far as you know it. Set yourselves to this with sincerity, and soon, by a mysterious influence, the inner eye shall be illumined anew. It would, indeed, be too lamentable to live bathed in the splendour of that morning from on high that has shone upon us during eighteen centuries, and yet to continue like those nations of pagan antiquity

which the prophet points out to us as sitting, or rather buried in darkness.

The apology of Christ consisted, then, principally in an appeal from unbelief to a consciousness of immorality, from the wandering reason to the perverted conscience. Such is the method that He has bequeathed to us, and I cannot too strongly urge upon Christians to make use of it in their relations with unbelievers. It will apply to all, and it can be employed by all. Let them copy their Saviour in this respect as in all others. I do not say, neglect other methods of proof; but I say, strike the enemy in his most sensitive point. Leave him not the position of an arrogant judge, for it is perilous for him; but make him descend from his tribunal by reminding him of his sins. On this ground we shall be certainly victorious. Discussion only arouses the more the intellectual forces of our adversary. The intellect is fertile in resources, and human language still more so. Arguments will be set against our arguments, and our opponent will probably retire satisfied with his talents and his dialectic skill. Let us go in haste, then, to the fact—which is sin and perdition—let us go thither, indeed, with tact and with caution, but with freedom too, for we are ourselves also to be judged. Let us not quit our adversary, or rather the poor sinner who cannot dispense with a Saviour, without leaving a dart buried in his conscience. It may perhaps bring him wounded and repentant to the divine Comforter. Scarcely had Christ spoken a few words to the Samaritan woman when He interrupted the conversation to address to her the humiliating suggestion: “Go call thy husband. I have no husband. Thou hast well said, I have no husband.” He puts His finger on the wound of this

soul, so that she will soon ask of Him its cure. The breach by which the Saviour enters within us is always made in our pride. The conviction of sin prepares His way. The preacher of repentance has ever been the precursor of Christ. Let us, then, preach repentance, not in a general manner, but to each man individually. Let us make him feel the sharp edge of that axe which is still laid unto the root of the trees, remembering that we must prepare for testifying to the truth by an energetic testimony against evil. He who attacks sin in the front, strikes at once at error and at moral evil, at that indivisible point where it is impossible to separate them from each other. So is this the most forcible and fruitful of apologies, because it goes truly to the foundation of things, and, according to the Master's example, appeals to the deepest and most earnest need of the soul—the need of salvation.

Some of our hearers may think, perhaps, that we have attached too much importance to the christian apology, and that we ought to shew more confidence in the grace of God. But such a scruple would evince a strange misunderstanding of the divine grace which makes human activity the ordinary channel of its gifts. We firmly believe that we ought in season and out of season, by the best possible means, to plead the Master's cause. But not the less fully do we accept the saying, "No man can come to me, except the Father draw him." Without grace, without the action of the divine Spirit, the heart and conscience remain insensible, and it is especially when we are opposing infidelity, that we feel the barrenness of human efforts by themselves. God has not abdicated the power of acting directly upon hearts. It is He who prepares the

ground, who gives the fructifying dew and rain, who often invests the simplest word with a secret and irresistible power. If He withdraw His breath, our preaching is like the sounding brass or the tinkling cymbal. This, O Lord, is why,—called as we are to render our testimony before an incredulous and perverse generation, we implore Thee to bestow on Thy witnesses a constantly renewed effusion of Thy Spirit. Give them the spirit of prayer, that they may never speak to their brethren before having spoken to Thee, O Father, to ask from Thee a word that shall be efficacious and full of Thyself. Shake human consciences, and let the great and severe lessons which Thou seemest to be about to teach our age, plough in this troubled soil a furrow for the eternal seed! Let Thy mighty voice impose silence on irreverent doubt and on scoffing incredulity, and let hearts that have too long been hardened, learning the nothingness of pride and glory, be broken under Thy powerful hand, so that from their humiliation faith may spring up within them, from the teaching of the witnesses to the truth, by Thy grace and to Thy glory!

X.

JESUS CHRIST A SACRIFICE.

Discourse First.

EARLY PART OF THE MINISTRY OF CHRIST, OR HIS MANIFESTATION TO THE WORLD.

“Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”—
JOHN I. 29.

WE have ended our description of the prophetic mission of the Redeemer, and must now touch upon His priestly work. It was not enough that he should be a prophet—it was needful that He should be also the sacrifice of propitiation, otherwise salvation would not have been accomplished, and the human conscience would still have sighed after the perfect Saviour; for everywhere and in all times it has recognized that a sacrifice was the indispensable condition of reconciliation with God. Our text reveals to us the extent of this sacrifice. It shews us that it must not be restricted to the death of Christ alone, but that it embraces also His entire life. These words in fact, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world,” were applied to the Saviour at the very moment when He was entering on His ministry. More than two years had passed from the day on which they were

uttered, when the redeeming blood was sprinkled on the earth. We hence conclude that the sacrifice of the cross was but the last term, the culminating point of a long sacrifice, and that the immolation of Christ commenced with His entrance into the world. He ceased not for a single instant to be the Lamb that taketh away sin, the expiatory sacrifice, the high priest of the new covenant. The sacrifice of the cross no doubt united and absorbed all the rest, as a large river absorbs all the streams that flow into its bosom. This was pre-eminently the sacrifice, that without which all others would have been insufficient. Therefore the Gospel returns to it continually, bringing back all the Redeemer's sufferings to the last, by which they were completed and crowned. But absolutely to isolate the crucifixion would be to misunderstand and do violence to our text. Christ took not a single step that was not on the road to the cross. He was ever climbing Mount Calvary. The sufferings of His life were added to those of His death for the great and final expiation.

And in what, my brethren, did this expiation consist? How could the Lamb of God take away the sin of the world? The answer to this question will alone make us understand the priestly work of Christ.

The normal condition of man is one of absolute harmony and perfect union with God. But as man is a free and intelligent creature, this harmony can only be realized by the accordance of his will with the divine will. The effect of the fall was the opposition of the human will to the divine, in other words, the violation of the law of God, or rebellion. The God of love is at the same time the God of justice and of holiness. He could not permit His law to be violated

with impunity without declaring that it is of no value, and that it is allowable to scoff at it and tread it under foot, that is to say, without overturning the very foundations of the moral world. The guilty must be made to feel that the discord between the creature and the Creator is a frightful overthrow of the order of the universe, that rebellion is not only a crime but also a misery, or rather the only source of all miseries. The law of God is an idle word if it bring not its violators to account, and demonstrate not by punishment the madness and infamy of rebellion. A pardon not reconcileable with justice would be equivalent to God's abdication, for His greatness is inseparable from His holiness. I will go farther still, and say that the human conscience would not wish for such a pardon, would not even believe in it, for the righteousness of God is inscribed on conscience in letters of fire.

Punishment, then, my brethren, is the sanction of the divine law that has been violated and outraged. It must fall upon the guilty head; even the hand of the Most High could not restrain the thunderbolt irresistibly drawn down upon sin. And, though God should not punish, man would punish himself; for as sin consists in repelling God, as it is the refusal to love, it is the refusal of happiness, it is the essence of all misery; sin and misery, indeed, from an absolute point of view, are one and the same thing. Pardon cannot then consist in the pure and simple abrogating of condemnation; it cannot reinstate guilty humanity in communion with God so long as it is in a state of rebellion. If it could, it would follow that God was no longer God, and love no longer love; that is to say, the profound harmony of two beings. Humanity cannot be saved but in returning to God; and it will

only return to God when the divine law shall have been perfectly accomplished by it. Heavenly mercy is manifested, not by at once suppressing condemnation, but by giving man the means of recovering his God, and of restoring to Him his heart. If Christ had come into the world to bring a salvation not founded on perfect obedience, He would have come in reality to deny the justice of God, and to hold it up to our contempt. It would have been better for Him not to leave the heavens, but to spare Himself a humiliation so useless, nay, so fatal in its consequences.

Not one of the children of Adam, brethren, could satisfy the divine justice. Were they not all shut up in sin and condemnation as in a close circle? The circle required to be broken, in a sense, by a creating and all powerful act. The Son of man, conceived of the Holy Ghost, the God-man, could alone fully realize the divine law. Moreover, obedience must extend to sacrifice, for the rebellion of humanity had entailed awful chastisements. Human life had become a life of sorrows, and the world a valley of tears. It was not now to be obedience, as at the first, in a bright and glorious dwelling-place, but obedience in the world of condemnation. It was necessary, then, for Christ to enter into this condemnation, to accept it, to take it on Himself; and in this His priestly work consisted. That which the Scriptures call the wrath of God, rested on our poor world. In coming down to it the Saviour placed Himself under that wrath; that is to say, He subjected Himself to all the punishments that spring here below from sin, as from an inexhaustible and infected source. From the humiliating weakness of infancy, to the still more humiliating weakness of death; from physical suffering to moral anguish,

carried to its utmost limit, so as to draw from Him those mysterious words: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" Christ took upon Himself all the consequences of the fall. Freely and voluntarily He accepted them, for He had not deserved them. He who was without sin was treated as a sinner. He suffered and died; but even His sufferings and His death rose to the height of a free sacrifice of love and obedience. Condemnation so accepted was no longer simply condemnation; it was an act of union with God, an act of reparation, a redemption. We may say with the prophet, that the chastisement that should have fallen upon us fell upon Him. His sacrifice has sealed for ever that union between humanity and divinity, of which His person was the certain pledge. His obedience unto death, even the death of the cross, has re-established the harmony between the human and the divine will which the fall had destroyed; for He was slain as the Son of man. He is the real representative of humanity. "He concentrated it in Himself," says Irenæus. His priestly work was then His essential work; and as it consisted in the voluntary acceptance of all the consequences of the fall, of all the sufferings of human life, we are justified in saying that it embraced His earthly course from its beginning to its close; and we shall now proceed to trace it in its most general characteristics. And all the time we shall be shewing to you the Lamb of God coming up to the altar to take away the sins of the world.

We pretend not, brethren, to unfold before you the entire life of the Saviour. We suppose it known to our hearers. And, besides, evangelical preaching is ever returning to this inexhaustible subject. We

desire only to give you a guiding thread that may direct you amid the multiplicity of facts, and to present to you a general view of that holy life which was, indeed, one long self-immolation. We shall devote ourselves to bringing out this, which is the principal side of the sacrifice. Let us never forget that at the basis of all the individual sacrifices lies the primary one from which every other flows,—the humiliation of the Saviour, His incarnation, His appearance in a world of sin. This is at once sufficient to compel us to recognize in Him the Lamb, the victim that taketh away the sin of the world. But we may not stop here. We must endeavour to point out the particular sacrifice that marked each period of the Redeemer's life, up to the mysterious hour which shews us all the sufferings of the Man of sorrows combined in one single indivisible burden to overwhelm Him and to save us.

In order to give you a complete idea of the ministry of Christ, it would be necessary to transport you to the place where He lived, and to make you, in a sense, tread that Jewish land which was His country; for while He was pre-eminently the man of all countries and all times, He had, notwithstanding, a well defined individuality. He was placed in certain circumstances, and in connection with certain facts; and the more exact be the account which we take of these circumstances and these facts, the better shall we know the Saviour. There will then be nothing abstract in our notions of Him—we shall see and hear Him. He will live in our view. He will no longer be the truth reduced to an idea; but the truth living, and consequently appearing under an individual form. We must then call your attention to the sphere of His

activity before dwelling on that activity itself. We ought to depict to you the condition of Judaism at this memorable epoch.¹ We ought to shew it you as in every point resembling expiring paganism, with its stoics and its epicureans, only the stoics were called in Jerusalem pharisees, and the epicureans sadducees. These two tendencies, which flourish only on the ruins of falling religions, and which try to escape from despair either through pride or through licentiousness, reappear thus, under different names, in the sacred land of revelation. The pharisee wraps himself in his legal righteousness, as the stoic in his cold virtue. Both the one and the other in reality worship only themselves. The sadducee, like the epicurean, no longer believes in the immortality of the soul; but saying, All is vanity on earth and in heaven, fails not to add,—except enjoyment. A third sect, that of the essenes, a kind of Jewish monks, living in abstinence and in solitude, represented in Judea the asceticism of the old east; while in Alexandria, a fanciful mysticism was seeking to make the ancient faith young again by practices of devotion, and to appease the troubled conscience by useless mortifications. Religion was no longer more than a vain form; and if it still exerted a certain influence on the people, it was because they confounded it with patriotism, to which the misfortunes of their country, and its subjection to the Roman yoke, had lent a kind of gloomy enthusiasm. We ought to paint in lively colours the gigantic formalism, the unbelieving priests, the scribes and doctors stifling with the letter of the ancient dispensation its vivifying

¹ See on this subject the picture of Judaism in its decline, in the Introduction to our *History of the Three first Centuries of the Church*.

spirit, the gross and fanatical crowd groaning under foreign domination and looking for a temporal deliverer. We ought to collect the indications of that vague expectation of a great event at hand which agitated all the world, disturbed Herod on his throne, troubled the sanhedrim, and impelled the people to follow in the steps of every impostor who could work on their passions. We ought, in short, to make you live the life of that time and of that country. Then would the Gospel history gain for you an interest entirely new. But we are unfortunately obliged to content ourselves with these general indications. What we especially regret is that we cannot dwell on the mission of the courageous prophet who was the immediate precursor of Christ, and gave voice mightily to those secret presentiments, to those pious hopes of salvation, to that inward prophecy which, in the silence of prophecy strictly so-called, had developed itself in sincere souls, and was ever announcing more and more clearly that the long and ardent desire of Israel was about to be satisfied! What a grand and beautiful figure is that of John the Baptist! May we not call him the ancient covenant personified saluting or rather adoring Him who was to come,—who had at length come? Have you not discovered in him the two most characteristic features of the preparatory dispensation? Who would not recognize the man of the law as he preaches repentance with energy so indomitable, and with accents at times so terrible? We might imagine that he had come down from Sinai, and that we could see on his austere countenance a burning reflection of the divine anger! As he plunges his numerous proselytes in the waters of Jordan does he not seem to be accomplishing the grand mission of

the Old Testament, which was to plunge the burdened sinner in the bitter conviction of his sin, to bury him therein, in a sense, in order that he might turn towards the God of forgiveness? On the other hand, have you not recognized the man of prophecy in those words which terminate his every appeal: "The kingdom of heaven is at hand?" and again in his constant saying, "There cometh one after me?" Law and prophecy, have we not in these the whole of the ancient covenant? John the Baptist came then in the name of that covenant, solemnly to declare that it was accomplished, and that before the sun of truth the pale beauty of the dawn had only to disappear. We should love to bring together the divers qualities which make this great servant of God the model for the witnesses to the truth! Consumed by zeal for his mission, living but for it, his whole being impressed with that seal of austere greatness, that deep and awful earnestness, which becomes a representative of God, the man of the desert even in the crowd, chastising by his rough and manly words the mighty and the powerful who were living in sin; disturbing Herod by his severe reproofs, even amid the impure festivities of his palacé, and burying in his conscience a dart that shall never be extracted; above all, humble among the humble, having but one ambition, which was to efface the traces of his own steps, that the Messiah alone might be admired; as anxious to decrease as others are to increase, and at length crowning by martyrdom an heroic life of fidelity,—such was John the Baptist, and such should we love to depict him in the latter circumstances of his ministry; but we must content ourselves with reminding you in a general manner how the arrival of Christ was

prepared for by His precursor. It is time to enter on His own work of sorrow and of love. Let us trace the different phases of the Saviour's life, seeking in each to justify the words of our text: "Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world."

Behold Him first in the manger at Bethlehem. He submitted to the humiliating commencement of human life, and passed through the absolute impotence belonging to the little child. He was seen lying in swaddling clothes like the meanest of the newly-born. This was the beginning of his voluntary abasement, for it was not to Him merely a natural fact. On leaving heaven He knew to what degree of weakness it was necessary to descend. Infancy, then, was the first of His accepted humiliations—the first of His sacrifices.

We must pass rapidly over the years regarding which the Gospel history gives us no details, respecting a divine design in this silence. Legendary tradition has given itself full scope in depicting this period of the life of Christ, because history was silent regarding it; and if we would know to what extent such tradition can spoil what it pretends to embellish, and adulterate what it professes to preserve, we have but to read the apocryphal gospels. Let it suffice us to know that Christ passed through all the degrees of human life one after another, that He subjected Himself to the conditions of gradual development, that He was like us in everything excepting sin, and that He experienced much of the suffering, privation, and anguish, inherent in our condition here below, during the thirty years of solitary labour and obscurity spent at Nazareth.

We now arrive at the important moment when He entered on His active ministry. After receiving a kind

of inauguration and consecration by baptism from the hands of the man of the ancient dispensation, He was driven into the desert, as if to prepare Himself there for the holy activity that He was about to display. It was there that He was to undergo one of the greatest sufferings of human life, *i. e.* temptation. Since the fall a mysterious power has been accorded to the spirits of darkness. Man has to contend against an invisible but furious adversary, who pursues him everywhere. We shall not attempt to demonstrate the existence of the rebel angels and their chief. We will only ask those who deny the fact for the sake of a preconceived system, whether they are quite sure that they have never felt this direful influence; whether they have never been pierced by a poisoned dart that no human hand had hurled, never heard a seductive voice more imperceptible than the slightest murmur of the wind and yet stirring the secret fibres of their heart or raising the tempest of their passions? Ah! for ourselves, we know but too well this obstinate and perfidious tempter, who is called the prince of this world. The present life is a scene of conflict and temptation, and Christ would not have been truly the Redeemer had he not been tempted like as we are. Behold, then, this Lamb of God opposed to the devouring lion! He accepted this humiliation and this suffering. He whose eyes are too pure to behold iniquity, allowed Himself to be approached by the leader of all rebellion, the liar and murderer from the beginning. Ah! who then would dare to say that this temptation did not form a part of His passion and of His redeeming sufferings! This would be to comprehend but little the holy aversion of good from evil, of light from darkness. The sacrifice commenced in the

manger, was continued then in the desert. We may add, that no preparation could have been better than that which our Lord found in His temptation for the opening of a career in which so much of conflict awaited Him. Nothing prepares for victory like victory; the best means of conquering is to have already conquered. The Saviour entered on His conflict having just vanquished His adversary in that strange combat which had the desert for its theatre. And not only was the temptation in itself a sacrifice, it was also an occasion on which Christ consecrated Himself afresh and altogether to the accomplishment of His mission of love. Satan tempted Him as the Messiah, seeking three times to persuade Him to employ His miraculous power for a personal and selfish object: "Command that these stones be made bread." "Cast Thyself down from the temple that the angels may bear Thee up." "Aim at the possession of the kingdoms of the earth." In other words, "Seek Thine own profit from Thy miracles. Live for Thyself and not for others." The temptation of Christ was thus, you see, under a special form, the eternal and universal temptation of selfishness. And you know how Christ three times repelled that temptation, shewing that having come to accomplish a work of love, He wished to accomplish it by love; and that He placed His miraculous power, like the whole of His life, at the service of His brethren, without diverting any portion of it to Himself. Thus was the temptation of Christ a renewing of the gift of His being to God and man, as well as a part of His sacrifice.

After preparing Himself thus in the conflict of the desert, Christ entered on His active ministry. This was a new step on the road to crucifixion, and fresh

sacrifices awaited Him. During the first part of His ministry, His life was a human life, consisting of that tissue of labours and sufferings which it is impossible to analyse, but which is woven for all. He accepted this freely. He fed on our daily food, which is often the bread of bitterness ; and ever broke it with thanks to His Father. And to those troubles which are inherent in our life here below, Christ added that of poverty. He took the most miserable form of human existence, because He wished to bear the burden of our greatest sorrows. Poverty is one of the saddest consequences of the fall : sad for the poor whom it afflicts ; still more sad, perhaps, for the rich whom it reproaches. It had necessarily, then, to find a place in the sacrifice of Christ. Another suffering, which never left Him, because it flowed from His love, was that of compassion. Christ's pity bore no relation to ours, so superficial, so transient, so easily borne. It was a true communion with those who wept and suffered : there was no suffering near Him but His heart was torn. More than this, He suffered even for those who did not suffer for themselves ; He wept over the hardened sinner, and nothing wounded Him so much as the sight of impenitent wickedness. The Lamb that taketh away the sin of the world bore its burden on His heart. We can well conceive how the contact with men must have pierced His soul ; and whoever has had a glimpse of the Redeemer's love will understand that His compassion formed a true element of His passion.

But, apart from those sufferings that were common to all the phases of His ministry, each special period had its contingent of sorrows. We can distinguish three epochs in the active course of the Redeemer.

That course was very short, not covering quite three years. In fact, if we reckon the feasts of the pass-over, the only method of determining the duration of His ministry, we find only three mentioned by Saint John. The first was that when Christ drove the merchants from the temple.¹ The second is referred to in the sixth chapter of John. At this Christ was not present. The third is the great and solemn feast at which the true paschal Lamb was substituted for the typical one. The whole of our Lord's ministry was contained in these two years and a half; and in this short space of time we discern three distinct phases. In the first, Christ revealed Himself to the world, manifesting Himself as the Messiah, the Son of God. This period commenced with the enthusiasm of the people, and ended with their desertion. It opened with the miracle of Cana, and closed with the discourse in the synagogue of Capernaum on the spiritual food, after which the crowd forsook Christ. The second period was that of the declared conflict between Him and the Jews—a constant melancholy combat. It began with the feast of Tabernacles at Jerusalem, when they wished to imprison Christ, and ended with the raising of Lazarus, which exasperated the Saviour's enemies, and decided them to keep no terms with Him. The last period was the consummation of the struggle—the last journey of Christ, the ineffable suffering, Gethsemane, Golgotha. These three phases are like three steps to the altar of sacrifice. The Lamb that taketh away the sin of the world, ascended them one after the other. He renewed His self-immolation on each

¹ John ii. 16.

one, till He was led to execution, without opening His mouth. These are the three acts of His passion. We shall now occupy ourselves only with the first.

But, before reminding you of the principal features of this holy life, there is one fact which we must, as it were, place on one side, because it stands in equal connection with the three phases of Christ's ministry. We refer to the choice and education of the apostles. The Gospels tell us that twelve men, belonging to the lower classes of society, were selected by our Lord to be His habitual companions, the witnesses of His actions, the hearers of His words, His intimate disciples in some sense. There are few facts that have been more distorted than this, or of which error and superstition have made a more lamentable use. We cannot enter on a formal discussion of this important subject, but must content ourselves with explaining our own view of the apostolate according to its institution. The word apostle signifies messenger. The apostles were then the messengers of the Lord. In this respect their mission had nothing special about it, since all Christians are the messengers of Christ. They were twelve,—a symbolical number, recalling the twelve tribes of Israel. These twelve tribes constituted the ancient people of God. The apostles, by their typical number, represented the new Israel, the new people of God. But neither in this sense were they invested with a character exclusively their own; for we are all designed to enter into the voluntarily constituted nation, as we are all called to convey the divine message. The promise of the Holy Spirit, again, was not a privilege confined to the apostles, for the Holy Spirit belongs to the assembly of Christians. Nor was miraculous power a gift peculiar to the apostolate,

since it was largely shed down upon the early Christians. What, then, was the character proper to the apostle? for he had an exceptional character: the choice of Christ abundantly proves this, as also the care of the eleven to make up their number after the treason of Judas. The special characteristic of the twelve apostles was this, that they were the first witnesses for Christ—His accredited witnesses. That which was required of Matthias, in order to his being invested with the charge, was to have been with our Lord from the baptism of John until the resurrection.¹ The mission of the apostle was to preserve alive the teaching and the remembrance of the person of Christ; and so to lay down the corner-stone, that the Church of all ages might be built thereon. He was pre-eminently the christian and the messenger, because He was commissioned to render a supremely trustworthy testimony to Christ. The apostle was not simply a witness, but the witness prepared by Christ Himself in an altogether special manner, by daily contact with Him. The apostolate of Saint Paul is an exceptional case; and if he was recognized, it was because the miracle of his conversion was a consecration no less valid than the peculiar preparation which the other apostles had received from the Master. This preparation was the rule, the entrance into the apostolate by another way was wholly exceptional. The apostles, then, did not constitute a college of priests, but a group of witnesses chosen from among the first disciples, and prepared by Christ to make up for His visible presence by their preaching or their writings, or by the writings of their immediate disciples. He

¹ Acts i. 21, 22.

so disposed everything that they might render an adequate testimony. He first formed them Himself, and then gave to them the Holy Spirit; not only for the fulfilling of their general christian vocation, but also for the accomplishment of their special charge, as the first witnesses of redemption. It is evident that, in this point of view, we cannot speak of an apostolical succession. If the apostles were the immediate witnesses, they could have no successors; for after immediate witnesses there follow only mediate ones. No institution can transmit the quality of ocular testimony; and since the authority of the apostles belonged to the relation that existed only between themselves and Christ, this authority was incommunicable. They personified and symbolized, not a body of bishops, but the Church itself, the christian people, the eternal Israel, the twelve tribes of the new dispensation. This church, taken as a whole, is their heir—it is the great messenger of God, the permanent witness of Christ, the apostle without a successor; and it is all these in so far as it rests upon the primitive testimony. It is with the apostolate as with a large river that flows first in a narrow bed, a perfectly pure and limpid stream; but its channel soon widens, it rolls in waves innumerable, and extends into a vast basin, while its waters are more or less changed. He who would taste them free from mixture, must drink of them near the source. The vocation of the existing church is certainly the apostolate, it is the great mission of christian witnessing; but it is the apostolate altered as well as enlarged. The primitive apostolate is the only one that conferred authority. From it arose all religious truth, and to it we must continually go back; but it is not the less certain that the church, regarded

as a whole, continues it, and that there is no other apostolical succession than this. So true is this fact, that even in early times the name of apostle was not given exclusively to the twelve—it was applied also to Christians, such as James, who had received no special consecration. Already was the approaching and necessary extension of the apostolate foreseen.

Whatever be the solution of these disputed questions, it is certain that Christ did choose some men from among the people to be His special witnesses. He selected them from the lower grades of society, because it was in these that He found the most simple souls, the most capable of receiving His divine impress. Moreover, every great religious reformation is popular; it begins in spirits fresh and impetuous, upright and ardent, that embrace the truth with uncalculating enthusiasm and unreserved devotion. The first disciples were no common men, but were representatives of the principal diversities of character to be found in this world. There were among them both ardent and calm natures,—practical men, and profound and mystical souls. Fashioned by a delicate and mighty hand, penetrated with the Master's spirit, they present to us the beautiful spectacle of regenerated human nature in its best defined types, each of them reflecting the Master on one side or another, and thus preserving for us the complete image of His divine humanity. Nothing is more admirable in the life of Christ than the manner in which He carried on the education of these rough and uncultivated men, who were for a long time attached to Him rather by the instinct of the heart, than by a rational conviction. With what art did the divine sculptor chisel that hard and shapeless marble till the brightness of His own thought could be

seen therein ! How He helped and cared for those fishermen and publicans ! He deposited in their hearts the seeds of truth, and then watered and cultivated them by His Spirit, giving them the explanation of all His works. More than this, He sent them on a mission, placing them in the salutary school of experience, and impressing on their minds the lessons they had received by causing them to teach them to others. For them He spoke His greatest words, those which were most mightily to regenerate the world. This handful of unlettered men were the brilliant auditory selected by the eternal Word. Let us learn of Him the fruitfulness of Christian labour in its very humility ! If we can only speak to a few souls, let us speak to them without discouragement, provided that it be with faith and love ! Let us cultivate them in obscurity with tender care. Let us remember that the latest discourses of Christ were uttered in an upper chamber in Jerusalem before eleven disciples, who scarcely comprehended Him ; and that these same words, transmitted from age to age, and flying from one end of the world to the other, have supplied consolation to thousands of Christians. Let us remember that these eleven disciples became the conquerors of the old heathen world, and were the first stones of the Church laid upon the divine foundation. After this, how should we doubt the blessed influence of Christian activity in the most limited sphere ?

But we must return, brethren, to the ministry of the Saviour and His priestly work, of which, however, we have not for a moment lost sight, for suffering had a large share in His daily relations with the disciples of His choice. One of the bitterest sorrows of the present life is the imperfection of human affections,

and the heart-wounds and painful shocks which they continually inflict. Affection without a cloud would be affection without sin. Poor sinners even in loving often cause each other suffering. No doubt, the Saviour's love for His disciples was perfect like His whole nature; and if He suffered, it was never through His own fault. But contact with these souls so little developed in faith brought Him inevitable trials; their want of sympathy, their feelings of pride and irritation, and later, their disgraceful infidelity, more than once wounded His heart, and drew from him words such as these: "How long shall I be with you, O men, slow to believe and to understand!"

But if He was not always understood by His disciples, He was at least loved by them, though hated by the world. This hatred, however, did not at first appear. In the early part of His ministry He manifested His glory to the Jewish people, and excited in them a lively, even an enthusiastic admiration; but the enthusiasm was quickly extinguished. The more Christ made Himself known to men, the more was He abandoned by them; and precisely here was the great suffering of this phase of His life. It is hard to be solitary amid one's generation, to speak in the desert after having once awakened a resounding echo. Such is, however, always the condition of goodness and truth in this world up to the day when the cross prepared for their immolation is at length planted on the earth, that they may be exposed to utter ignominy. Christ accepted this condition, and submitted Himself to it in every circumstance. Let us trace with careful eye the progressive manifestation of His doctrine; at each revelation we shall see the ranks of His disciples clearing. He is the less admired, as He shews Him-

self the more admirable ; the more His holiness shines forth, the more does the admiration felt for Him diminish.

Christ revealed Himself first as a powerful Messiah. He multiplied miracles, the principal object of which was to call the attention of the Jews to His mission, and to lead them to recognize in Him a messenger from God. Saint John in speaking of the first of Christ's works says, that "He manifested forth His glory."¹ In fact, the miraculous healing, the raising from the dead, the sovereign power that He exerted over nature, cast great splendour on His person. As long as He did many miracles He was the object of the popular complacency. "Jesus," says Saint Matthew, "went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people. And His fame went throughout all Syria : and they brought unto Him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatick, and those that had the palsy ; and He healed them. And there followed Him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judea, and from beyond Jordan." If Christ had confined Himself to manifesting forth His glory, the whole nation would have certainly remained faithful to Him. A powerful and glorious Saviour who cures the sick and multiplies bread to appease the hunger of the people, is sure to be accepted by all the world. There is nothing in Him to wound the prejudices and passions of the crowd.

¹ John ii. 11.

May He only continue ! A few more miracles and He shall be crowned a king !

But, as we have said, miracles were only the more outward side of Christ's work. It was necessary that He should reveal the more elevated design of His mission, which was a spiritual one. And now He will encounter opposition. John tells us that after having manifested forth His glory at Cana, the Lord went to Jerusalem to attend the feast of the passover. This was His first journey in Judea after he entered on His active ministry. He went to the temple, found it profaned by those who bought and sold, and the changers of money, and drove them out ignominiously in holy wrath. Christ no longer appeared only as a prophet working miracles. The people felt that He was one sent against all that was evil and in opposition to God. They felt that He was a religious reformer, and they remembered that saying of a prophet : "The zeal of Thine house hath eaten me up." Those who made their gain out of sacred things trembled before Him, and beyond a doubt, implacable hatred was kindled against Him in more than one bosom on that solemn day.

Christ was a religious reformer, but it must be known in what sense He was so. He first attacked the most gross and obvious abuses ; but he did not wish the people to be deceived, and to imagine that He had come only to make clean the outside of the cup and the platter. In His conversation with Nicodemus, which took place at the same period, He insisted on the necessity, not only of an external renovation, but also of a new birth : "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot

enter into the kingdom of heaven.”¹ He proclaimed at once that there was salvation only in Himself, and that He was the only Son of the Father who had been given to the world, that whosoever believed in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.² This sublime doctrine was not yet understood; but in the measure in which it was comprehended, so far did the Son of God encounter a more lively opposition.

He returned from Jerusalem into Galilee through Samaria, and took advantage of this journey to reveal a new side of His mission, which was sure to alienate from Him a great number of the Jews. The simple fact of His conversing freely with a Samaritan woman, proved that He did not consider Himself as sent exclusively to the Jews. His words, repeated to the disciples and by the disciples to the Jews, were still more explicit. Did He not declare that the day was coming when men should no longer worship at Jerusalem exclusively, but in all times and places should celebrate worship in spirit and in truth, to the honour of the God who is a Spirit? To speak thus was to deposit a new leaven of hatred in the heart of those proud Jews who profoundly despised foreign nations, and the Samaritans above all. Here was a new revelation and growing hatred!

On His return to Galilee our Lord wrought many striking miracles:—He cured the son of Herod’s officer, and the demoniac of Gadara; He raised to life the daughter of Jairus and the son of the widow of Nain. These miracles no doubt excited great admiration, but as Christ revealed not only His glory, but at the same time His doctrine, the admiration was mingled, and in many cases began to be replaced by a

¹ John iii. 5.² John iii. 16.

gloomy displeasure. It was thus that in the town of Nazareth they sought to put Him to death, because He had offended the national pride of the inhabitants by shewing them that the grace of God was not restricted to any country, and that those who believed themselves to have a natural right to it were, on the contrary, deprived of it by their very pride. "Many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian."¹ The touching scene that took place in the house of Simon the pharisee, the forgiveness so mercifully granted to the poor sinful woman, completed the exasperation of the proud Jews against Christ. Here was on the one side a pharisee, a man, that is to say, esteemed in the nation, a just man according to the world's opinion, who thought he had no cause for self-reproach. On the other side was a miserable degraded creature, a lost woman. She shed a few tears, she uttered a prayer, and Christ declared her justified, placed her, that is, on the same rank with the just and virtuous Simon, or rather I should say far above him, for she had more loved Him who is alone worthy of being loved. Thus, then, with his righteousness and his good works, the pharisee was placed below the penitent sinner. He felt that the Master would not say to him as to her, "go in peace," but that He regarded him as outside of salvation. Nothing could be more odious to the proud man than this practical revelation of free forgiveness. He trembled with rage. You will remember also that in the parable of the pharisee and the publican, our Lord supplied so clear a commentary on this fact, that it was impossible to be deceived as to his real ideas. It was understood,

¹ Luke iv. 27.

then, that He had brought a doctrine which reduced all self-righteousness to nothing, and only rewarded repentance and love. Again we may say: a new revelation and growing hatred!

A second time Christ went to Jerusalem for the celebration of one of the Jewish feasts, though which one it is difficult precisely to determine—we only know that it was not the Passover.¹ Our Lord took advantage of this occasion to reveal still better the nature of the reformation that He wished to effect. He cured a paralytic by the pool of Bethesda on a Sabbath day.² This was to set Himself in direct opposition to the tradition of the pharisees. It had happened to them as it does to all who have lost the religious life, and yet wish to preserve a certain kind of religion. Having no longer the reality, they attach themselves to the appearance, conceiving that it will bring them the same advantages. They hold all the more to the forms, as they have lost what is essential and fundamental in religion. Thus the better to deceive themselves, they multiply these forms indefinitely, and exaggerate the ceremonial side of worship the better to conceal the frightful absence of faith. There was at Jerusalem an idolatrous attachment to the Sabbath, just because the worship of the living God had ceased. A profound faith is above these exaggerated scruples—a religion that is external and consists in practices, believes itself lost if one of these mere forms escape from it. It needs for its support a whole religious apparatus. It fears in reality that if this apparatus were removed it might be condemned to that earnestness which it would

¹ John v. 1. The most important of the Jewish feasts would not have been indicated without an article, as this is in the original.

² John v. 9.

avoid at any price. It multiplies defences that the man may be more free within. But Christ, in boldly setting Himself above the pharisaic traditions regarding the Sabbath, overthrew the scaffolding that had been so laboriously raised to hide the irreligion and infidelity that reigned in the hearts of men. He shewed, hereby, that He wished religion to be regarded as something serious ; and that the faith which He brought to the world demanded not the pretence of vain forms, and a material devotion, but the gift of the heart and life. The simple fact of a cure wrought on the Sabbath day had then a most weighty signification ; it was the express condemnation of all that the doctors of the nation had taught. Thus Saint John tells us ; that the Jews already on this occurrence sought to put Christ to death. Once more, then, we find a new revelation, and growing hatred !

Our Lord quickly returned into Galilee, and it was then that He spoke the sermon on the mount, which may be regarded as the charter of His kingdom. In this discourse He summed up all that He had said and done from the commencement of His ministry. His opposition to the formalistic Judaism of His day was manifested in a most complete and cutting manner. If He avowed that He had come to accomplish the true Judaism, that of the law and the prophets, He indignantly repelled the false and hypocritical judaism, the judaism of tradition, of noisy alms-giving and long prayers, rigidly observing the law of retaliation, and boldly violating the eternal law of God ; finding means also to suppress that law, under pretext of interpreting it. Christ openly broke with this judaism. He unmasked and crushed it. He proclaimed a spiritual law, the infinite law of love. He announced a spiri-

tual kingdom, founded on the pardon of sins, the entrance to which is through tears, through the hunger and thirst of the soul ; and sufferings and persecutions are predicted for those who enter. The way is narrow, and the gate strait. Only by becoming poor and small can it be passed. Christ certainly was not such as He had been expected to be. If with one hand He raised and healed, with the other He presented a cross. " If any man will come after me, let him take up his cross and follow me." How should we not once more exclaim : A new revelation, and growing hatred !

But the time was at hand when our Lord was to reap the fruit of His courageous fidelity. The people followed Him still, because they liked to see His miracles, and hoped to profit by them without accepting His doctrine. A new passover, the second during Christ's ministry, was approaching. But as His hour had not yet come, and as He had everything to fear from the pharisees of Jerusalem, He remained still in Galilee. Then took place that significant event related in the sixth chapter of Saint John. The Lord had by a splendid miracle satisfied the hunger of a numerous crowd that had followed Him near to the sea of Tiberias. On the morrow, this same multitude, charmed and excited by the marvel, and hoping to find in Jesus, notwithstanding His declarations, the temporal Messiah that they desired, sought Him beyond the sea of Tiberias. They rejoined Him in the great synagogue of Capernaum, and pressed around Him. Christ found once more the people of former days—they contemplated Him with admiration, they celebrated His power, they were ready to kiss the hand that had broken to them the miraculous bread.

If you had entered that synagogue, you would have certainly believed His triumph final. They called Him Master; they disposed themselves to hear Him, perhaps to worship Him. "Master," say they, "when camest Thou hither?" Now, He speaks. No doubt an audience so favourably disposed will be carried away with enthusiasm. But listen to Christ. Instead of promising some new miracle, He speaks of the spiritual and eternal food. This is the first disappointment. The people had come to Him because they had been satisfied with bread, and He tells them to labour for enduring nourishment. And this labour, in what is it to consist? they ask. If we must turn away from the good things of this world, at least we must be able to conquer heaven by our works—what shall we do? "This is the work of God," replies our Lord, "that ye believe."¹ At this saying they remember all that they have heard of Him, they think of the pardon He had granted to publicans and sinful women, and they begin to tremble with indignation. But Jesus goes farther still. This faith is to be placed in His own person. "Whosoever seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, hath everlasting life." Nay, should we believe in Thee, in Thee, the son of the carpenter! this is asking too much. "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know?" Without noticing these murmurs, the Lord touches on the most mysterious points of His doctrine. He speaks of His death, of His body that was soon to be crucified; and in lively imagery declares that all who would live to life eternal must eat His flesh and drink His blood; that is to say, must receive into their

¹ John vi. 29.

hearts the crucified Christ. The hearers now certainly find themselves too far from the point from which they had started. They came to ask for material miracles, and they are brought into the presence of all that is most spiritual, profound, and offensive in the Saviour's doctrine. He has now fully revealed Himself, and He is not the Messiah whom they desire. They understand this clearly; and see with what eagerness they retire! They are as impatient to go away as they were to come. There remain but a few disciples. Surely these, then, are faithful friends; surely these may be depended on! Alas! some even detach themselves from this little group, and rejoin the crowd. Then the Master, seized with indescribable sadness, turns towards the twelve to say to them, "Will ye also go away?" The revelation of Christ has been finished, and the desertion is almost complete! This is the result of the first period of His ministry. He manifested Himself to the world, and the world rejected Him. What more terrible judgment could have been pronounced on our poor humanity! The Holy One and the Just appeared, such as He was, without a veil! Count, then, those who remained with Him, and reckon if you can, those who forsook Him. For ourselves, we want no other proof of the depth of our fall. On the day that Christ stood fully revealed, He found Himself alone with twelve apostles, and one of them was a traitor! Canst thou boast now of thy greatness, of thy moral dignity, O miserable human nature! I only require to crush thee these words of my Saviour to the disciples of His choice: "Will ye also go away?" See the opinion that He had of thee. He had found thee so materialized, so cor-

rupted, that He doubted even His own ! And forget not that we are still only in the period of desertion. The conflict, the mortal conflict, has yet to begin ; and if there remain to you any illusion concerning humanity, you need but wait to lose it, for the nearer considerations of that conflict and its sanguinary result, to which we shall invite you in our next discourse.

Is there not, my brethren, a very serious appeal to your consciences in the simple narrative of this first period of the ministry of Christ ? The number of those who think that they belong to Him is in our day considerable. But may there not be some misunderstanding, which it would be well to dissipate ? For what should assure us that the men of our generation are better than the contemporaries of Christ ? Is human nature in itself superior at one time to what it is at another ? What, then, should be the reason of the present adherence, and the former desertion ? Know you not that the Saviour met with an enthusiastic reception at the commencement of His ministry ? So long as He manifested His glory by miracles, He was surrounded by the very same crowds that forsook Him when His severe doctrines became known. May we not, hence, conclude that the greater number of those who now call themselves Christians have as yet considered only the external side of Christianity ? Miracles, properly so called, have been rare since the apostolic age ; but there is always a brilliant side to christianity—it is that of social consequence, general influence, and a glorious history. Be assured, then, that the great mass of professing Christians of our day, in every communion, and every Church, have attached themselves mainly to this point of view. If it had

been generally understood that it was a question of conversion, humiliation, and sacrifices, you would have seen long ago the waves retiring, and leaving the shore dry. There would be around the true representatives of Christ the same solitude as formerly; or, perhaps, the desertion would be still more complete. Let but the cross be perceived by the greater part of the professing Christians of our day, and you will see them flee with hasty steps; some sorrowful, like the rich young man; others irritated and furious, and ready to persecute Christ in the person of His true disciples. I will go farther still, and suppose that the divine Saviour were to enter this temple as He entered the synagogue of Capernaum. Suppose that He spoke to you as He spoke to the Jews; that He demanded painful sacrifices—that He required from you an earnest, consistent christianity. Suppose that He brought to you His cross, and presented it, not only that you should worship, but that you should bear it; is it sure that you would all remain here? Suppose that He called upon you to give up a portion, a large portion—observe that I do not say the whole, of your goods to the poor; is it quite sure that you would remain? Suppose that He charged you to break that idol, to dissolve that connection that keeps you from Him, to give up that habit that is so dear to you; is it sure that you would remain? Suppose, finally, that He made you comprehend what He meant by eating His flesh, and drinking His blood, and what constitutes that identification with the crucified Christ to which we are called; is it very sure that you would all remain? Alas! we feel a mournful certainty that a great number from among you would rise and go away like the inhabitants of Capernaum, crying, If we had known

that this doctrine was so severe, we would never have come to embrace it. "This is a hard saying—who can hear it?" Would to heaven that you could thus be made to know yourselves; for we are sure that you would go away with a sharp arrow in your soul; and it might at length so transpierce you as to bring you, overwhelmed with the burden of your sins, to the feet of the Son of David, saying to Him: "Take pity on us. Speak now, and we will do all that Thou commandest." Oh that God may Himself tear away your illusions, and force you to acknowledge that hitherto your christianity has been a lie! This is the best desire that we can form for you.

But I resume my hypothesis. Suppose that this temple had become almost empty, like the synagogue of Capernaum—that there remained only a few true Christians, and that the Lord turned towards them and asked, "Will ye also go away?"

Is it quite sure that there would be no hesitation, even among these, when they should come to understand what the Master means by *bearing His cross*? Is it quite sure—but no, I will not contemplate the desertion of the Lord by true Christians! No, Lord! the hesitation could not last with us, who have perceived not only what Thou requirest from us, but also what Thou givest us in exchange! No, we will not go away. Whither should we go? How should we live—how die without Thee? Weak as Peter, fallible as he, we, nevertheless, say with him, "Thou hast the words of eternal life. We have known and believed that Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God!" We say, trusting not to ourselves, but to Thy compassions, and to the assurance of Thy help, between Thee and us the union is for life, for death, for

eternity. Thou wilt give us to follow Thee in Thine isolation, to follow Thee in Thy conflict, and even in Thy death—we shall thus be ever with Thee; and after having suffered with Thee, with Thee also shall we reign!

XI.

JESUS CHRIST A SACRIFICE.

Discourse Second.

THE AGONY AND THE CROSS.

“Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”—
JOHN I. 29.

WE have divided the ministry of Christ into three periods:—His manifestation to the world; His conflict with the proud Jews, and the result of that struggle; His passion and death. We have traced with you the first period; we have seen the eager and enthusiastic reception which was given to the Saviour so long as He contented Himself with revealing His glory through His miracles. We have seen Him deserted by the same crowds that had followed Him even to the desert, as soon as He manifested not only His power but His holiness. At the end of our last discourse we showed you this divine Redeemer left alone with a few disciples in the synagogue of Capernaum, and asking them, “Will ye also go away?” But desertion was not enough. It was to be speedily followed by open and declared conflict. With Christ no neutral position can be maintained; He must be either adored or hated. It is this awful conflict be-

tween light and darkness that we come now to witness. In truth, as we have already shewn in the first of these discourses, this conflict has never been interrupted on earth for a single instant. It has been carried on everywhere, in all times, and under the most diverse circumstances. It alone constitutes the exciting interest in the history of humanity. But as in every war there is one decisive day, when the hostile armies meet with a terrible shock, so in the war sustained by the power of love against the power of perdition there is a final day, the results of which must be decisive. This awful but triumphant combat is that of Christ against the world. Nothing can be more solemn or more grand! Every event is small and pitiful compared to this! Let us then follow, brethren, the phases of this momentous struggle between good and evil. Let us learn to measure the depth of our fall, seeing in the dying Christ the true ideal of humanity; while His enemies and His murderers remind us of the degradation of our race—for here we meet with the extremes of good and evil. Let us learn what are the conditions of truth here below. The disciples may not be better treated than was the Master; the world will hate and persecute in them what it cursed and crucified in Him. The truth is condemned to a cross in this world of sin and infidelity. Let us learn not to be overtaken with a cowardly astonishment when the opposition of the world to the Gospel reappears, when the conflict threatens to arise anew in a serious manner. Let us recognize in this fact the realization of a fixed law in religious history. Finally, let us learn of Christ to fight as we ought to fight, to conquer as we ought to conquer, to be at once calm and strong, gentle and

indomitable. May the picture of His conflict with evil, in recalling to us all that is most essential in the work of redemption, teach us, at the same time, all that is most important in the Christian life.

We must pause for a moment, brethren, before rapidly tracing the principal incidents of the conflict, to consider what are the respective forces of the combatants. Forget not that what took place eighteen centuries ago at Jerusalem occurs afresh in every period of the Church's history. The same enemies of the truth re-appear under different names, though they are less recognizable, their features less clearly defined than in the gospel history. It is there that we must examine our adversaries, if we would know them well. The Gospel paints them in colours so true, that we see them thoroughly. Never had they a better opportunity of displaying themselves. The truth then appeared alone, so to speak, without any external support, without the fame of great triumphs already won, without the sanction of centuries. There was no need, from a human point of view, to treat it tenderly; men could insult and blaspheme it at their pleasure. They did not require to cover their fatal dart with deceitful homage. That was not the time for delicate irony and indirect assaults. The hatred of Christianity in its rise possessed a certain freshness, and it was entertained in all security. Never, also, were there writers like the sacred historians for making the personages of their narrative live under our eyes. To relate thus is hardly to relate; it is to resuscitate, to give life to those who once lived. By the force, not of art, but of simplicity, they present to us the very reality of the facts. Herod, Caiaphas, Pilate, Judas, all are so naturally represented, that we know

them as if we had conversed with them. The various types are so admirably characterized, the gloomy figures so expressively drawn by the evangelists, that their very features are graven on our minds, never to be forgotten. And the Gospel is no less admirable in the setting forth of evil than in the revelation of divine love. This is because it is almost as important to us thoroughly to know the former as the latter; and we ought to profit by the clear light which the sacred narrative throws on the Saviour's enemies, to examine ourselves, and see whether we can be hidden in their ranks. The details, however, that we have already given regarding some of them will save us the necessity of any lengthened illustrations.

The first of these enemies is he whom the scriptures call the adversary, or *Satan*, the opponent of all that is good, true, and salutary. We may say that the two great champions in this terrible war, which has been carried on during so many ages, now meet at length in single combat. No being intervened between the devil and his divine adversary. We have no longer before us only men—some under the influence of the Spirit of God, and others obeying the impulse of Satan. On the one side we have the God-man, in whom dwelt the fulness of the Deity; on the other, an accursed humanity, in which dwelt all the fulness of devils. God in humanity is opposed to Satan also in humanity. It is a single combat between the chiefs of the two armies. But we must discover in what manner this visible action of hell was carried on. We have one proof of its exercise, at once palpable and incomprehensible; I mean possessions. I know that I shall appear at the present day very much behind-hand in criticism in admitting the fact of possessions.

According to certain teachers, they involved nothing more than a wild form of madness, a very simple and ordinary fact ; and Christ in addressing demons and driving them out, lent and accommodated Himself to a popular prejudice. For ourselves, we declare that it would be impossible to us to conceive of such an accommodation without our ideas of the Saviour being seriously affected. What! could He knowingly and wilfully favour a gross superstition, cherish a senseless prejudice? Still more, He must have apparently driven out demons, knowing full well that a monomania was not a demon. He must have virtually acted a comedy. He must have been, not the divine Revealer, but one of those magicians of the East, so common at that period, who based their power on pretended miracles. If He did not act a comedy, He must have been quite deceived on an important subject, and we could no longer place in Him absolute confidence. If one of the facts on which the gospel testimony is most explicit be thus got rid of, we know not what can resist criticism. Moreover, this fact has a moral importance. It is impossible for us to explain how the demoniacal influence was exerted, but we can well understand that in this final crisis of religious history the agency of hell, like that of heaven, would be manifested with far more power than in the ordinary course of things. It had to put forth its most violent effort to ruin the plan of God. After having believed itself the legitimate possessor of humanity, it felt that humanity was about to escape from its grasp! How should it not have stirred itself mightily to retain this fatal power. To deny the possibility of such acting of the infernal powers on mankind, we ought to know, better than it is given us to do, the relation of the visible

world with the invisible. It is difficult to define with precision the limits of the natural and the supernatural, and in periods of profound and universal perturbation, we should be often inclined to say that the two spheres blend. However this may be, we fully admit the demoniacs of the gospel. We believe that the possessions were not without some relation to the moral condition of the afflicted persons. We think that nothing better prepared for this miserable and mysterious state than the mental trouble induced by sin—that it, no doubt, commenced with some terrible crisis of the inner life. It was certainly a proof of the power yet left to Satan to combat the Redeemer. And did not this power appear equally in the unheard-of perversity of His enemies? Evil reached in them a degree never known before. We feel that we are not witnessing the ordinary display of wickedness, but what the Scripture calls a mystery of iniquity. There are, in fact, mysterious depths of evil, almost as astounding as are the depths of good. Hell has its secrets as well as heaven, surpassing and overwhelming human reason. Once and again, behind the visible combatants the invisible ones appear, and the presence of demons, as the presence of God, reveals itself by extraordinary signs. The demoniacs who most confound us are not those that were delivered by the powerful word of the Master, but the judges and executioners of Christ, the miserable men who cried: Crucify Him! crucify Him! and who, beneath the cross, prayed that His blood might be upon themselves. This was the most awful possession! There was a moment when the whole Jewish people was, as it were, one wild demoniac, the passive instrument only of the wrath of hell. Nothing proves

more surely than the conduct of that people the direct and personal intervention of Satan in the conflict.

Next to Satan, or rather under his standard, nearly all the men of high rank in the nation fought against Jesus. He was opposed by all the privileged classes, by all the rich with a few easily numbered exceptions. We acknowledge that the rich and the learned may be Christians, that they do become so in all ages ; but it is not the less true that this fact so remarkable in early days has constantly reappeared in history. Our Lord Himself gave it great weight by this astounding saying : "It is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." We can easily understand that those who wish to live in splendour on earth, and who employ their riches to feed their vanity and multiply their pleasures, range themselves among the enemies of Christ. He came into the world to oppose all that they are doing in it. He came to humble all that is exalted, to bring all vain appearances to nothing, to crush all the powers of the age. He came not only to command patience in those who suffer, but also self-renunciation in those who enjoy. He said to all : "Give up your goods, sell them for the poor, that is to say, place your life and your property at the service of God and of suffering humanity !" How should not those have been indignant who believed that their wealth was given them that they might be clothed in fine linen, might live in magnificence and be insolent to the poor ! At first they went away sorrowful like the rich young man in the Gospel, but soon returned furious and exasperated, and were the first to demand the death of Him who had spoken

the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, and who had preferred the widow's mite to their proud and ostentatious alms. Let the rich men of our day examine themselves well to see whether they are with Christ or against Him. The only way for them to be certain on this point, is to enquire whether they have become poor in spirit;—for all the rich who continue rich in heart are most assuredly in the ranks of the Lord's enemies.

The highest council of the nation signalized itself especially by its animosity to Christ. Alas! how often have not men, high in authority, acted anew the same sad part! Worldly dignities, when not received as a high mission of love, become a pedestal for the great idol, the human Me so universally adored. They carry pride to a great degree of exaltation. The consideration, the flattery by which they are surrounded, provide them with a triple rampart against humility. When Christ appeared to proclaim at once universal condemnation and free forgiveness, the great ones of this world, loving their seeming greatness, trembled with indignation at being thus disgraced; they accused the Gospel of being a social overturning, a fermenting of revolution, and they took a marked place among the enemies of true Christianity. But the most implacable adversaries of the Gospel were found among those who were invested with religious authority. The body of priests were distinguished by their violent hatred of the Saviour; and nothing could be more natural than this, since those who regulate religion, and draw from it both glory and profit, charge with usurpation any who attack their credit by a religious reformation. Christ, in introducing to the world the universal priesthood, was the living

condemnation of the sacerdotal spirit, and whenever this spirit did not succeed in either overpowering or changing the Gospel, it could not find thunders or anathemas enough for its abuse and proscription.

We have already referred to the pharisees in several connections. They stood in the first rank in the conflict with Christ. What alliance indeed can there possibly be between a religion of form and a religion of spirit? The pharisees felt that at the first breath that mummy, trebly dead, which they were wrapping in sacred bands by calling it religion, would fall to dust. They felt that their hypocrisy was unmasked by the very appearing of Christ, and that before His holiness the pretence of an outward piety was clearly unveiled. They felt that their reign would end whenever Christ should triumph. And do they not feel the same now wherever they still exist? Between them and Christ the struggle is ever to the death; for He pursues them from one intrenchment to another. From Judaism the pharisee passed into the external church; he carried into that his long robe, his lengthened prayers, and his traditions. From the great unfaithful church he passed into the churches of the reformation, established himself in them, and in the course of time fashioned them more or less completely for his own use: and he reappears in every church, even in that which is the best organized, and if necessary, takes possession of all belonging to it that is most anti-pharisaic in doctrines and institutions, to insert in this his fatal formalism. He may be known by his self satisfaction, by the cold and barren regularity of his piety, by his high and dry dogmatism, by his joy at being unlike other men, by the severity of his judgments, by the hardness of his

heart. Here, then, is the immortal pharisee—Christ's enemy, open or concealed, in all communions! Would to God that he were not here, listening to us, and rejoicing that our words concern him not in the least!

As to the sadducee, he was the liberal-minded man, the philosopher of Jerusalem. He rejected the greater part of revelation with the ease of superior intelligence. He was no scrupulous devotee, but a man of pleasure and of elegant habits. Would it not seem probable that he at least would be tolerant, and would not mingle with the brutal enemies of Christ? Why should he in this matter join himself to the hypocritical devotees, he who knew so well how to scoff at them on occasion, he, the liberal philosopher? But that came now to pass, my brethren, which has happened in every period of the Church's history. Men of infidel tendencies have always made common cause with hypocrites to extirpate true Christianity from the world. It is hated equally by both classes. Christ had to complain of the former as much as of the latter, because He came to disturb their voluptuous life and to shake their convenient philosophy. He came to tell of judgment to those who said, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." He was the solemn witness to that invisible world which they desired to forget. It was necessary, therefore, that they should free themselves from Him before resuming their life of pleasure. And be not deceived; the materialistic philosopher is in reality of the same opinion as the Sadducee of Jerusalem, and through his fine words and his pretended homage, there penetrates an inveterate hatred of the foolishness of the cross, though that hatred is only manifested in our day by a smile of disdain and an expression of inward satisfaction in not believing as the simple do,

the letter of the Gospel. But let the requirements of Christianity be felt by our sceptical philosophers in a serious manner; let them be placed in the presence of a true Church bearing its cross, and you will hear a fierce burst of anger from these men of exquisite refinement, of liberal mind, these Athenians of philosophy. We know now how to value the toleration of free thinkers, since we saw a considerable number of them demanding the blood of the Just One, above all, since He was given up to crucifixion by a sceptical philosopher whom no one certainly will accuse of fanaticism after hearing his disdainful inquiry, What is truth?

It is a strange fact that following the wealthy, the men high in office, the priests, pharisees, and sadducees, even the mass of the people took part against Christ! They reached, indeed, such a degree of delusion and of fury as to demand the deliverance of a miserable robber, in order to be sure that Christ should not escape the most ignominious death. It seems that the people had no pretext for their hatred; for Christ had never despised them,—had done them, indeed, nothing but good. And more than once they had shown themselves grateful; they had followed Him, and seemed to love Him. Even a few days before the passover they had evinced a return of enthusiasm. But it mattered little! There needed but a few agents of the Sanhedrim, a few pharisees mixing with the people, to raise them in mass against their benefactor like a furious sea under a sudden rising of the wind; so that in the end they furnished Christ's enemies with an army well prepared. The history of this weak and cruel people is the history of all those who form part of a multitude

professedly Christian, without having given themselves to the Saviour by an individual act. There is no root in their attachment to His person; they follow Him to-day for the very same reason that will induce them to abandon Him to-morrow. As there is nothing earnest in their faith, as soon as ever the following of Christ shall require them to pass by the judgment hall and by Calvary, they will not hesitate, but will be found with the persecutors against the persecuted, and perhaps will be the most violent of the number! They will follow out to the end the impulse received. Passive instruments of the anger of others, they will serve that anger basely, even though it lead them to crime. Always, to the end of time, shall the undecided and wavering multitude be seen in the day of peril turning against Christ and cursing Him whom they once adored! Whoever has not been detached from this multitude by a positive and regenerative act, which has divided his life into two portions, is a latent enemy of Christ, whose hostility will sooner or later be revealed by circumstances. Satan counts upon him, and will know where to find him in his time.

But whom do I see next among the enemies of Christ? An apostle, one of the twelve, a companion of the Saviour! What! was it not enough that so many foes were leagued against Him, but must the most cowardly defection thin the ranks of His natural defenders? And let it not be supposed that this was the execution of a fatal decree which, taking off the responsibility from Judas, would bring to weigh upon Christ the accusation of having chosen him in order the more surely to ruin him—an idea which no theology in the world could induce us to accept, and which runs counter to the sovereign assertions of conscience!

The mystery is great—who can doubt it? But we accept it as it is, provided only that it be not employed to overturn the moral world; for Christianity could not survive morality but with it must be maintained or overthrown. Christ chose Judas to make him an apostle, not a demon, and if he became a demon the cause must be sought in himself alone. God who brings good out of evil, did in the end make use of him as He makes use of Satan, but He no more desired the crime of Judas than He desired the existence of hell. The defection of the apostle remains then a moral fact holding out to us a terrible warning. Here was a man who had no doubt felt a certain attraction towards Christ, and in whom the Master had recognized certain dispositions adapting him for a grand vocation. This man was, during three years, near to Christ, and yet it was he who sold Him! He allowed the most fatal tendencies to get the rule within him and sought to follow them, while still in the Master's service. He asked of Him glory and power, and when he saw that shame and the cross were coming in their stead, he wished to compensate himself for the disappointment, and so received the thirty pieces of silver! Just as in every age the world has found a Caiaphas to conspire against Christ, a Pilate to condemn Him, an ungrateful people to demand His death, so has it ever found a Judas to betray Him. There are but few churches that can hear without well-warranted fear those words of our Lord: "One of you shall betray me!" Ah! how should we not work out our salvation with trembling when we remember this saying? There has always been a traitor at hand when he was needed for the plans of Satan! My God! let it not be one of us; for of all miseries the greatest, the most awful, is

that of betraying the Saviour ! Let us labour for Him, for Him alone, without any thought of personal interest or of human glory, and then shall we be able to say that "the prince of this world hath nothing in us."

Such, then, brethren, were the enemies of Christ. They were both numerous and skilful. They possessed power and reputation ; and they had a traitor on whom they could reckon. They were not deterred by any scruple. Christ, on the contrary, was alone with a few disciples who were soon to flee ; He had no external power, nor did He wish for any, but put it far from Him. How, then, could He stand against enemies so formidable ? His very weakness was His strength—weak on the human side, He was almighty on the divine. He is one with the Father, and this unity rendered Him invincible. He needed no human skill, because He had but one desire, and that was to reveal the whole truth. Finally, He had love that even the furies of hell could not affect. This is why the Lamb of God was at the same time that Lion of Judah whom prophecy has shewn us marching in His strength.

And now that we are acquainted with the combatants, let us witness the combat, the successive phases of which it will not be difficult rapidly to trace.

The first phase of Christ's ministry came to an end in the synagogue of Capernaum. He knew that for the future the conflict must be waged and carried on without interruption to the hour of His death. He wished to prepare His disciples and to prepare Himself for the serious events that were at hand, and He therefore retired with them far from the ordinary scene of His activity. And this He ever did on the eve of each important crisis of His life. The need of solitude was remarkable in our

Lord. He could never do without the desert, for thither He went to collect new forces for His days of trial; shewing us that the source of all fruitful activity, like the sources of great rivers, is hidden in solitary places; that it also springs from rugged heights far from the tumults of the world. Let the Church not forget the example of the Master, but like Him frequently keep its watch in the desert; let it take refuge in the sacred solitude of divine communion before engaging in conflict; let it often return thither, feeling that, if the Master needed to do so, much more should the disciples repair their spiritual strength in silence and seclusion!

Jesus Christ crossed the lake of Gennesaret to go northward into Galilee, to Cesarea Philippi. He took advantage of this journey to converse with His disciples upon the mission which they had accomplished in His name in the smaller towns of Judea and of Galilee, by which mission He had designed to give them a practical lesson in the work to which they were called. He recognized that notwithstanding the weakness of their faith they had decidedly risen above the prejudices of their contemporaries, and He shewed, on occasion of Peter's saying, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," that the explicit and courageous confession of His name would be in all ages the foundation-stone of the Church. At the same time He clearly announced His death to His disciples, and for the future spoke of it frequently. He desired to prepare them for it, and also to make them understand that this death was on His part a free and conscious sacrifice. The prophetic words of Christ on this subject are of great importance. He was the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world, because He foretold and accepted His death. On the northern frontier of Galilee He

met that Canaanitish woman, whose unwearied faith obtained from His power a splendid miracle, leaving us a most admirable example of persevering prayer. It was in returning from this journey that the miracle of the transfiguration took place. Have you ever observed the subject of the conversation of Christ with Moses and Elias during that hour of glory amid the celestial brightness? They spoke, we are told, of His death and of His cross, affording a new proof that this time of seclusion was for the Lord a solemn preparation for the sufferings and griefs that awaited Him.

After having thus fortified Himself on this glorious mount, and received the startling testimony of His Father, Christ returned to Jerusalem. To go thither was to go to conflict, and He knew it; but the time had come when He should sustain that conflict with indomitable energy. I shall put aside now all facts of detail, and confine myself to a general outline, endeavouring above all to bring out the Saviour's bearing in this combat, the sanguinary result of which He knew full well.

He reached the holy city at the time when one of the great Jewish feasts was being celebrated, the feast of tabernacles. He knew that ever since the cure wrought on the Sabbath day, He had had implacable enemies at Jerusalem, and that they had power to do Him harm. Had He consulted human prudence therefore, He would have been silent; for to proclaim His doctrine was to place Himself in opposition to the Sanhedrim. What, then, did He do? Saint John tells us, relating the words of some of his hearers: "Is not this He," said the Jews, "whom they seek to kill? But, lo, He speaketh boldly." You hear this; He speaketh boldly. He does not teach in

secret. No; He enters the temple in which the multitude congregate, and proclaims His doctrine in the very face of His enemies with amazing force. He has thus taught us what attitude the Church should assume in the great fight of truth, which is ever being renewed, and with what courageous fidelity it should respond to the threatenings of its adversaries. He who at Jerusalem spoke boldly, was the same who, on a recent occasion, had commanded to render unto Cæsar the things which were Cæsar's. And by His example He shewed that His disciples should recognize established authorities, and submit to their prescriptions so long as they impinge not on the rights of God. But the same impulse of conscience that leads them to obey within such limits, compels them to disobey as soon as those limits are passed. Christ spoke boldly, because it was a duty to speak, when souls were to be saved. As the great Ambassador of the Father, as the Messenger of His love, the Saviour could not be silent! What! because it had pleased a few sinful men to lay the truth under an interdict, to forbid its witness and representative to speak, should He be silent? When He knew that He had a word of healing for lost souls, should He be silent? When God had said to Him, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people," should He be silent? When He saw that people like sheep wandering in the desert, should He be silent? Let those who have nothing useful to say, be silent and be prudent! Christ will speak, and speak boldly, because He has the words of eternal life; and He will be heard to cry within a few steps of the priests and doctors who had resolved to take Him prisoner, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." It was not from man that He would ask

permission to save and deliver souls. He must speak freely by the right of divine love, of His own love. He must speak alike under all circumstances, before His judges as before His disciples. His voice should only be stifled in His blood, and from that blood there should rise a testimony more powerful than all His discourses. And thus will all speak who have a doctrine of salvation to proclaim to a perishing world; they cannot be silent. The good news of pardon cannot be withheld, and whoever should keep it to himself under pretext of being forbidden to announce it, would prove thereby that He had not really received it. This freedom in conveying the evangelical testimony is moreover not only the accomplishment of a duty, it is also the secret of irresistible power. It denotes such strength of conviction that it attracts souls that feel the need of solid faith. It is as it were the seal of a divine mission. Thus do we hear the people cry out while listening to Christ: Truly this is a prophet. This courage produces an ineffaceable impression on men's hearts, placing him who manifests it above all difficulties and all opposition. Oh that the Church of our day may not deprive itself of the power which springs from indomitable fidelity!

But the Lord not only proclaimed the good tidings of salvation, He also openly combated error. We saw, on occasion of His apology, how He established the truth of His doctrine by appealing to the conscience of his hearers; and we then remarked the character of sincerity in His words. But He went further still. Not content with pointing out, in a general manner, that incredulity had its source in sin, He attacked the men of His time, characterizing them as they deserved; and specifying the peculiar form of

error and of sin in the presence of which He found Himself. He unmasked His adversaries, and even hurled at them terrible anathemas. His words had a bitter point for false teachers and hypocrites. Look through His discourses at this period, as contained in the eighth, ninth, and tenth chapters of Saint John, and you will acknowledge that no disputant ever displayed more vigour than Christ. "Ye are from beneath; I am from above. Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do."¹ "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses. Ye fools and blind: ye strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres. Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?"² Is this the meek and humble Master who speaks? Is it Jesus of Nazareth, the friend of the afflicted, He who took little children and blessed them? Yes, brethren, it is still the Saviour. He was not contented with affirming the truth; but also denounced indignantly the false teachers of His time. He did not share the scruples of many Christians, who are ready to take offence at the first animated attack upon those by whom our holy religion is disfigured. The example of Christ teaches us that the Church, in the combat of truth, cannot dispense with a vigorous controversy. It should, of course, be elevated and serious like that of Christ; it should address itself continually to the heart and conscience: but it should be cutting and energetic! To affirm truth is no doubt the first duty of the Church. It should build up—its work is essen-

¹ John viii.² Matthew xxiii.

tially positive; but it should also destroy. It would not be enough to manifest the Gospel, if the doctrines that oppose it were not overthrown. The human heart is so fertile in illusions that it would seek to harmonize error with truth if it were not driven to choose between one and the other. It is necessary, then, that Christians should forcibly protest against all adulteration of the truth; and should indicate aloud all that appears to them contrary to that truth in a manner not to be mistaken. So long as they have not fulfilled this duty, they are more or less responsible for the misunderstandings which their silence sanctions. And how should we not protest, with some warmth, when we know the value of souls, and see them taken in the snares of the devil? Let those who see no danger in spiritual blindness use all possible caution in the enlightening of their erring brethren; but for ourselves, who believe that blindness to be fatal, we will tear the bandages from their eyes with a hand that may be thought to be rude. And if we are accused of a lack of charity, let it be known that such a reproach touches Christ Himself; for never will our words equal the burning indignation which appeared in His. For ourselves, we recognize in that indignation the same love which caused Him to weep over the impenitence of Jerusalem. How should not He, who wept thus, have experienced a holy wrath against the instigators of the rebellion?

At the same time it was not enough for Christ openly to denounce the false teachers of His day. He never for an instant ceased to do good, and His works of mercy inflicted the most dangerous wounds on His adversaries; and thus precipitated the close of the struggle. The marvellous cure of the man who had

been born blind excited great admiration in the people, and, consequently, great fury in the Sanhedrim, which was still increased by the simplicity and candour of the man's own testimony. Our Lord thought it well to withdraw Himself, for the second time, from the hatred of His enemies. He went again into Galilee, but made only a short sojourn there, returning through Samaria to Jerusalem, for the feast of the dedication. The opposition between Him and the Jews became now more bitter than ever. He avoided several murderous attacks, and retired with His disciples to the banks of the Jordan. It was there that He received the news of the sickness of Lazarus, upon which He braved all dangers to go and comfort the sisters of His friend; and, finally, raised him to life before a great number of Jews. This miracle, accomplished at the gates of Jerusalem, brought to its height the fury of His enemies. His death was quite determined on; and we now enter the third period of His ministry, which comprehends His last journey to Jerusalem, His passion and His death. Thus, in spite of all the dangers that surrounded Him, Christ continued His mission of love. He never allowed Himself to be absorbed in His controversy with the pharisees; but sought to do good, to comfort the afflicted, and heal the sick, as in the first period of His ministry. Nothing could deter Him from scattering His benefits. A sublime example for the militant church, which has no better means of defence or of conquest than its love! Let us beware of ever neglecting the work of consolation with which we are charged, under the pretence that we are engaged in meeting unjust attacks. Let us meet them as Christ did, by opening the treasury of grace, and becoming its more generous

dispensers. The enemies of christianity are completely vanquished by this response of love, which clearly demonstrates the excellence of the religion that they calumniate, and heaps coals of fire on their heads.

The Saviour's adversaries were plainly recognized as vanquished by Him, since to His latest miracles they could only oppose a hateful crime. What a frightful part did they act during the whole of the conflict! While Christ opposed them by openly preaching His doctrine, comforting the afflicted, healing the sick, and pointedly attacking the unworthy rulers of the nation, they employed against Him methods the most perfidious. They had but two weapons at their service, which were cunning and violence. Now they laid snares for Christ, and libelled Him; now they urged the people on to stone Him. They had no other argument to bring to bear against Him than the senseless one of brutal force. When the Lord overpowered them by His last and most brilliant miracle, they invoked against Him murder and treason. He must die—this was their determination. To buy over Judas, to pay false witnesses—these were their tactics. They never thought that they were thus providing a most effectual vindication of christianity; by taking the ground of violence and cunning, they proved that it could only be damaged by means infamous and abominable, and could not, in any way, be conquered by honourable weapons.

We have now reached the last period of the ministry of Christ. His hour had come, the solemn hour of indescribable suffering, and of perfect obedience! Now, especially, may we say with John the Baptist: "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world!" Behold Him slain and bleeding!

Christ withdrew with His disciples after the raising of Lazarus to Ephraim, which was near to the wilderness.¹ The passover was at hand, therefore He passed but a few days in this secluded place, and at Jericho joined the numerous parties which were coming from all parts of the country to the holy city. Once again He manifested His power in the cure of blind Bartimeus, and in the remarkable conversion of the publican Zaccheus. From Jericho Christ went to Bethany, to spend the Sabbath in the family of Lazarus. Many times before had He come thither to seek for repose, for here was He tenderly loved; and fervent gratitude had been combined with love since the raising of Lazarus. Mary, whom Luke has described for us as listening to Jesus, and the bare sketch of whom in the Gospel has given us a type of deep inward piety, which is full of sweetness and beauty—Mary now sought to express all the love and gratitude which her heart contained for the Master, by emptying upon His feet a vase of perfume. Let us leave the avaricious Judas to complain of this, and let us bless her for having rendered this pious homage to the Saviour! Alas! those feet were soon to be torn by nails; soon would He be given up to ignominy. It is sweet to us to think that ere that time came He should have found in this sinful world some hearts that understood Him and comforted Him beforehand. But the Lord soon quitted Bethany to go up to the feast, the companies of travellers joining Him on the road. These travellers had no doubt heard of the raising of Lazarus, and they felt for Christ the enthusiasm of former days, and led Him again in triumph to Jeru-

¹ John xi. 54.

salem ; scattering palm leaves on His path, and singing hymns to His glory ! And He consented to this triumph in order to remind His disciples, in a visible manner, that glory belonged to Him, and that if He deprived Himself of it voluntarily, the day would come for Him to take it again in its utmost splendour. The day of palms was the prophecy of the future triumph of the Church, and of its divine Lord. At Jerusalem Christ met once more His obstinate enemies, who sought to turn His triumph into confusion by proposing to Him difficult questions ; but the Saviour's indignation burst forth on them, vehement and terrible, and they had not a word to say in reply. It was at this period, also, that Christ uttered the prophecies about Jerusalem and the future of the Church, and those solemn parables in which He recommended to His disciples the vigilance of the wise virgins, and the fidelity of the good servants in administering the talents intrusted to them.

Our Lord had now but a few hours to pass on earth before the great sacrifice. He went to the upper room where the feast of the passover was prepared, and no human words can describe the scene that took place there on that solemn eve. After having washed His disciples' feet, that He might teach them by a palpable sign what He meant by humility, He broke the bread and passed the cup, saying, "This do in remembrance of me." The Lord's supper was instituted as the sacrament of redemption and the feast of love. The traitor had just gone out to complete his accursed work. Then did the Master pour out His heart into the hearts of His disciples ! Promises, consolations, the overflowings of holy and divine love, all are contained in these last discourses, in which

the very soul of Christ is breathed. Nothing can be compared with them. It is the christian heaven that opens; that region of purity and love of which we so rarely catch a glimpse, here spreads itself before us, luminous, profound, serene.

After having spoken to His disciples, Christ spoke for them to His Father. He took them to His breast, and placed them under the eternal arms, and then He could say, with His eyes raised towards God, "I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do."

He had finished it, no doubt, but it remained for Him to crown it by His death. He had gone with His disciples into the garden of Olives. Once more He sought seclusion, for He had to prepare Himself for the final combat. What a night was that passed in Gethsemane! While the disciples were sleeping for sorrow, He remained alone in the presence of the terrible sacrifice that He was to offer on the morrow. All the bitterness of human life was poured into His cup. How He groaned! He uttered loud cries, He lay in the dust, great drops of blood stood on His brow! Men have been found impious enough to mock at His anguish, and to draw from it an argument against Him; but we would have them know that it is by this anguish and this extreme humiliation that we recognize our Deliverer! That Saviour who fought and suffered, who prayed and wept, it is He that we need; for the cry, "Father, Thy will be done!" certainly came from a human heart, since it came from a heart that was broken, and for our salvation that cry overpowers the first Adam's cry of rebellion!

The day of execution has dawned, and we see Judas with his impious band. But they could not endure

the lustre of holiness which shone from the person of Christ. They fell down as if thunderstruck, and only gained possession of Him because He was willing to give Himself up. From the insults of the Sanhedrim He passed to the outrages of the judgment hall. The cowardly Pilate condemned Him in spite of his conscience; and crowned with thorns He was led to Calvary, sinking under His cross. The Jews there crucified Him between two thieves, and had even the shameful daring to mock at His sufferings!

Fix your eyes, then, on this cross, my brethren, and never remove them thence. It is this which consummates your redemption! All the sufferings that constitute condemnation were comprised in this sacrifice—comprised and accepted in one act of perfect obedience, accepted by the Just and Holy One, and consequently transformed into a saving expiation. Shall I speak of bodily sufferings? I may point to those sacred limbs so frightfully torn. Shall I speak of sufferings of the heart? I appeal to the disgrace, to the disciples in flight, to the afflicted mother and friend weeping near the shameful tree, on whom Christ cast a glance so full of sadness and of love! Shall I speak of anguish of soul, of the cry: My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me? The mysterious identity between condemned humanity and the only Son of the Father is revealed in these astounding words which no human explanation can interpret in a satisfactory manner! Shall I speak of the woe that combines and unites all others, of that which is especially the wages of sin—I mean death? However marvellous it may appear, the Prince of life has died; He has been buried; the wages of sin He

has received—He, the innocent one. Shew us a single suffering wanting at the cross, excepting that of remorse? Shew us a single thorn lacking in the bloody crown? If then it be true, that all the sorrows of human life were poured upon this innocent head, if He made of them one single sacrifice, and offered it to His Father in its voluntariness and in its sanctity, we must confess that nothing more remains to be done for salvation, for there is nothing more to suffer, nothing more to accept, and we may say with Him : “It is finished !”

Yes, “it is finished.” The great work which we have tried to describe to you, begun on the day after the fall, continued during forty centuries of preparation, carried on without intermission by the Son of God Himself, has now reached its conclusion ! Divine love is no longer in the presence of rebellion, but of a love equal to itself. There is no more discord between it and humanity. There is perfect harmony, absolute union,—and this union is the re-establishment of man in His high condition ; it is salvation. To the revolt in Eden we can oppose the sacrifice of Golgotha ; to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil the tree of the cross ; to humanity in rebellion humanity obedient unto death ; Christ, in a word, to all condemnation and all perdition ! Therefore would we henceforth know nothing but Jesus Christ and Him crucified. We would pitch our tents on the mountain of the cross ! There, day by day, would we learn afresh the goodness of our God and the love of our Saviour, and read our pardon in those characters of blood in which alone it could be written for a race perverse as ours ! There would we sing the praises of the Lamb

that was slain for us, and has taken away the sin of the world ! Thence would we derive love and consolation, and, dying to ourselves with Christ crucified, would prepare to rise with the risen Christ unto life everlasting !

XII.

JESUS CHRIST A KING.

“Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.”—1 TIM. iii. 16.

WE have looked at the work of Christ on two sides. We have considered Him as a prophet and as a sacrifice; we must now regard Him as a king. And thus shall we have completed this grand and magnificent subject, or at least completed the sketch of its external outline. To enter into its inner depths, our whole life would not suffice, nor will they be exhausted in eternity.

We have recognized and adored redeeming love in the prophet who traversed Judea and Galilee announcing the kingdom of God, and in the holy victim slain on Calvary; nor shall we less adore it in the divine king of the Church. The words of Christ were the words of love, His sacrifice was the sacrifice of love, and His royalty was the royalty of love. Our text, after referring to the incarnation in these words: “God was manifest in the flesh,” presents to us, in the clauses that follow, the successive phases of our Lord’s royalty: “He was justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.” His resurrection, His ascension, the power of His

Gospel over the church and the world, and His final triumph, such are the different degrees of His glory. Let us trace them rapidly in order, to perceive that His kingly work was no less perfect than His prophetic or His priestly one, and that we no more have to look for another king than for another prophet or another sacrifice.

If Christ did not enter on His royalty in an evident manner until after His resurrection, He yet never ceased to be in a spiritual sense a king. He no more ceased to be a king than to be God. His divinity like His royalty was veiled; He had voluntarily quenched the brightness of both by His abasement. The king of glory had taken on Him the form of a servant, but under that form He was still no less the king of glory. Thus we are told that the celestial spirits, whose glance cannot be obscured or deceived by appearances, worshipped Him at the very moment of His greatest humiliation. He was adored by angels in the wilderness of the temptation. On more than one occasion His royalty shone forth like a bright and rapid flash of lightning. Who is this, said the people, who speaks with authority to the winds and the waves? Who is this that forgives sin? Strange to say, it was before the tribunal of His judge, it was on the cross that the eternal kingship which belonged to Christ was revealed in the most positive manner. Think, brethren, of the amazing declaration of the Lord to Pilate. "Art thou a king?" asked the proconsul scornfully, wishing by cold irony to set forth the contrast between His position as accused and His high pretensions. "I am a king, thou sayest it," replied Christ. "Whence, then, is thy right, thy power?" "It is here: I am a king, for I bear witness unto the

truth." Thus, according to Christ, the testimony borne to the truth invested Him with true royalty. Truth, in fact, brethren, is made to reign, and reigns by a divine and absolute right. The eternal thought of God, it must of necessity be realized. It cannot but triumph, for its defeat would be the defeat of God Himself. To it belongs the ultimate teaching in all ages, the teaching which brings light absolutely into the ever-renewed chaos of human opinions. It alone has deep roots, because it is rooted in God. That which is opposed to it has but a borrowed and essentially transitory life. Every idea, every doctrine that comes not from it is destined to feed upon itself, and however brilliant be its blooming it will soon be said: "I passed by and it was no more." Truth advances slowly but surely to universal dominion. The sovereign in heaven, it must reign with splendour upon earth. It matters little if it be often subjected to ignominy. The ignominy is but for a time, and the glory shall be eternal. It matters little if it be apparently supplanted by usurpers. It is not the less queen and sovereign. Each new usurpation prepares for it a new triumph. Whoever bears witness to it connects himself with its glorious destinies. Whoever utters a word of truth utters a royal word that must be victorious over all contradiction. We share in its royalty in the measure in which we are faithful to it. Thus, if a man be found who possesses the truth not in part, but in completeness, who is identified therewith, we may say that that man is king in an absolute sense. Such a man has been found—the God-man. He was not merely the witness to the truth, but also its living expression. He could say, I am the truth. And with equal right He

could say, I am a king; for even in our sinful world, the truest, the most durable, the only immortal and invincible royalty is that of the truth. It is well for us to remember this when we see that truth ensnared, insulted, trodden under foot.

Christ shewed Himself a king also on His cross. "Having spoiled principalities and powers," says Saint Paul, "He made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in His cross."¹ These principalities and powers represent in Scripture language the forces of evil acting in the world and ruling it; and Christ shewed Himself a king with regard to these in two ways. First He made a shew of them, then He triumphed over them. His adversaries had supposed that by nailing Him to the cursed tree, and inflicting on Him the punishment of a slave, they were dishonouring Him for ever. But they were deceived; the infamy fell on them and not on the victim. It was seen what the world was fundamentally,—that world, the enemy of God, which in the ordinary course of life conceals its hatred and succeeds in passing for honest. Here on the cross it was fully unmasked—seen without its veil which had so often been woven of apparent virtues, of hypocritical moderation, and vain religiousness. On this terrible day it stood entirely revealed, as the murderer of the Holy One and the Just, finding no suffering sufficient for its animosity. Long had it nourished in the depths of its heart this impious hatred against Christ; but it had been silent. Now it spoke, and manifested itself in full liberty. What had till then been whispered, burst forth openly in the awful cry: "Crucify Him, crucify Him!" The powers of the world were then truly made a shew of before heaven

¹ Col. ii. 15.

and earth. They found in the cross a position of infamy, and could never escape from it again. They were torn from the obscurity in which they love to dwell, plotting against God and against His Anointed. Christ, condemned to death, overwhelmed with the shouts of an ungrateful people, appearing the most abandoned and pitiful of men, was in reality a triumphant Conqueror, dragging after Him His vanquished enemies, and making them a shew.

Triumphant ! the word is not too strong, my brethren, and the apostle was warranted in adding that the cross of Christ did triumph over the powers of the age. The world first tried, by the excess of the torments inflicted on the Saviour, to trouble His soul. Satan endeavoured to take it in the snare of pleasure and worldly glory, and was, as we have seen, ignominiously vanquished. He attempted on the cross to crush that strong and holy soul, by suffering carried to its utmost limit. And he found that he had but given a new lustre to its moral perfection. If Christ shuddered in Gethsemane before the fatal cup, this shuddering had no other result than that of rendering His obedience more real, more human, more redeeming. The hateful ingratitude of the Jews could not excite in His heart a single bitter or irritated feeling. Nailed to the cross, He still remained the incarnation of love. It was not possible to diminish that exceeding love which, in itself alone, revealed His divinity. You may spit upon Him, smite Him on the face, nail and tear His limbs, mock at His sufferings, offer Him vinegar when He said, I thirst—drown His groans in laughter. You may slay Him, but you cannot kindle within Him a spark of anger. Approach Him at the moment when the soul is about to quit the body,

when it is weakened by extremest suffering ! Harken to the latest words of His agony : " Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do ! " This is His vengeance and His wrath. Recognize, then, your impotence, and, overcome and as it were crushed by His forgiveness, confess that your victim triumphs over you by the force of love, and that never even in the glory of heaven had He displayed more sublimity than in this dark hour of His humiliation. Moreover, forget not that this death was the sacrifice of redemption, the crushing of the serpent's head. Often in the heat of a combat a conquering chief, covered with dust and blood, seems nearer to defeat than to victory. But what signify appearances ? He knows full well that the enemy is in flight, and that he is inflicting his last blows. When Christ exclaimed at the moment of yielding up His spirit, *It is finished !* He uttered His cry of victory. This cry escaped Him as His breast heaved with its latest breath, but not less surely had He broken the strength of the great adversary. The powers of the age were vanquished. They knew it not, but supposed on the contrary that they had freed themselves from this awful representative of the cause of God. At the very hour when hell was perhaps rejoicing at having destroyed the plan of divine love, what was this crucified and vanquished one doing ? He was opening heaven to a poor repentant sinner. " This day," He said to the penitent thief, " shalt thou be with me in Paradise." What more striking proof could be afforded that the wicked one had, as ever, failed in his scheme, and that in fact Christ had triumphed on the cross over the powers of the world, after having made a shew of them openly.

But let us hasten, brethren, to remark that this

moral kingship, of which Christ could not be for an instant deprived, did not suffice to Him. It was to lead to an external and brilliant royalty; to have its crown and its sceptre. We must not think that obedience and righteousness are recompensed only in a mystical way, if I may so express it, by the inward happiness which they excite in the heart. This moral satisfaction is certainly a precious compensation for the sacrifices which are involved by the sincere and consistent practice of goodness in this world, but it is not the only consolation of the righteous who are persecuted. They should know that if the present be against them from a worldly point of view, the future is on their side in every sense. If it were otherwise the tempter's lies would be in part justified. He tries to make us believe in a kind of opposition between goodness and happiness. According to his treacherous suggestions, sin and happiness are on one side, and on the other duty and afflictions. It is important that this false and dangerous method of stating the case should be corrected, and that it should be understood that man does not really have to choose between goodness and happiness. Looking at things not simply in the sphere of the finite, in which all is begun and nothing finished, and no final judgment can be passed upon anything, but from an eternal point of view, the only one that is true and conclusive, happiness and goodness would appear indissolubly united. The law of goodness is the expression of that will which governs the world. He who has promulgated it is the Almighty One, and He will give it satisfaction in every domain. It follows that the narrow way of obedience and sacrifice, leading at first over hard and stony ground, must be ever rising towards serener heights,

till it end in light and glory. The broad road, on the contrary, grows more gloomy continually as it tends to the dark abyss in which at length it wholly disappears. If, then, the path of Calvary did not conduct to the gate of heaven, the law of God would lose its perfect character. The sacrifice of Christ must of necessity lead to triumph and to royalty, and it is of this external royalty that we have now to speak, closely following our text.

It is first said of the Saviour that He was "justified in the Spirit." What, then, are we to understand by these words? For Christ, to be justified in the Spirit was to receive in a solemn manner the confirmation of His words before the world; for this justification would be like a divine seal placed on His mission, an irrefragable declaration of the justice of His cause and of the acceptance of His sacrifice by His Father. Now for such a justification nothing less was necessary than His resurrection. If He had not risen He would have been proved to be only an impostor, or at least an imperfect Saviour. His name would have been added to the long list of pretended Messiahs which chronicles the deceptions of mankind. Christ asserted beforehand that He should not remain in the tomb. If He had remained there He must have been but a fallible man, and His teaching, invalidated on one point, would have lost all value in our eyes. Christ declared Himself the Son of God; but if He who professed to be the creating Word could not escape from the power of death, it would have been evident to all that He was only one of ourselves. Finally, and above all, He had called Himself the Redeemer, the conqueror of sin. Had He not risen, His death would have been heroic and sublime, but without any

expiatory value. His last words must then have been regarded as the ravings of a sufferer, and the wind would have carried away His exclamation: "It is finished!" like the utterance of a dying man's delirium. The resurrection is then the only adequate and complete justification of His ministry. It is not only the crown of His work, but also its necessary completion.

We know that this is one of the miracles that are most offensive to incredulity, and that seem to it especially absurd and impossible. It discourses cleverly on the laws of our physical being; it demonstrates with force and clearness that from a natural point of view the principle of life when once extinguished cannot be rekindled, and it treats the resurrection of our Saviour as a ridiculous fable. For ourselves we cannot hesitate between a material and a moral impossibility. The latter alone seems to us absolute and invincible. We also believe in the permanence and inflexibility of the law of the creation; but that which is the axis around which everything turns is not a material but a moral law. To it the laws of the physical world are necessarily subordinated; for it God has already shaken the earth,¹ and to give it a final consecration He has said: "Yet once more, I shake not the earth only, but also heaven,"—as if to shew us in the most solemn way that all the natural laws that rule the external world are nothing in His eyes compared with the fundamental law of the spiritual world. Tell us no more, then, of the impossibility of the resurrection! An apostle tells us what is really impossible, for Saint Peter says: "It was not possible that He should be holden of death."¹ That was impossible, because, death being the wages of sin, the justice of God would have been in fault had Christ

¹ Heb. xii. 26, 27.

¹ Acts ii. 24.

been retained in its bonds after the redeeming sacrifice. God could not demand again the payment of a debt already discharged. These bonds of death must be broken by Christ in the name of a necessity higher than all the necessities of natural order. It was impossible that He should be held in them as it was impossible that God should be unjust. What mattered it, then, that on the evening of the day of Christ's death all seemed to be over in the view of His enemies, and even of His friends, who withdrew to shed the bitter tears of despair? What availed that new sepulchre and the stone rolled without? What availed the guard set around the tomb to watch? What mattered it that a night and a day went by, and that the third day began before death gave up its prey? Be not disturbed at the sight of those women bringing the perfumes consecrated to the embalming of dead bodies. What mattered those funeral cares that evinced so little faith, and so much affection for the Master? Spite of all these appearances it was not possible that He should remain in the grave. The stone is heavy, but it will be rolled away by the angels of God, the guard set around will flee at their appearing, and the pious women who came sadly to pay the last duties to their Lord, will return with a song of triumph, for behold, on the morning of this third day He has risen. He has shaken off His winding-sheet, and soon will He be recognized by the palpable signs of His crucifixion as well as by the accents of His voice, which will cause the hearts of His disciples to burn within them. Justified in the Spirit before His own, He will be justified also before the world by their testimony, and this testimony shall be so clear, so precise, and so unanimous in spite of differences in detail, which do but bring out all the more

the accordance in essential points, that to shake it the very foundations of historical certainty will need to be overthrown. The witness of their life and of their death will be more powerful still, for by their calmness in suffering, by their joy in chains or under the blows of their persecutors, by their radiant hope in the midst of death, even of execution, they will not cease to say: He is risen, and this is the secret of our courage and our peace. Were He not risen, we should be of all men most miserable;¹ but He is, and though we are the scorn and off-scouring of the world, though oppressed and overwhelmed on all sides, wounded, imprisoned, in labours, in watchings, in fastings, like sheep destined for the slaughter, we are nevertheless the happiest of men, on the ground of this glorious resurrection.

You know, brethren, the importance that the ancient church attached to this fact of the Saviour's resurrection, which is now kept too much in the shade. We feel, in reading the discourses of the apostles, that they could not be weary of dwelling on it. That great and glorious third day had brought them all light and all consolation. They saw in Christ not simply the gentle Master and the resigned victim, but also the King of glory and the Prince of life. They comprehended at once His abasement and His greatness. His humiliations appeared to them what they really were—a voluntary abnegation. They had a glimpse, under palpable sacrifices, of the great mysterious sacrifice of the God made man. All the past assumed for them a profound meaning, and thus the royalty of Christ illumined His life in the retrospect with a new brilliancy. Then His resurrection was

¹ Cor. xv. 19.

also in their eyes the triumphant evidence of the Gospel. They thought that as it had dissipated their unbelief it must bring conviction to all hearts that were not hardened. And they knew also that the risen Christ was the first-fruits of them that slept, and that death had been vanquished for them as well as for Him. It was near His empty sepulchre that they could sing that hymn of Christian immortality, founded not on philosophical suppositions, but on a positive fact: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" The resurrection of Christ, the second Adam, the Lord of humanity, announces then our own, and thus is it for the Christian a source of inexhaustible consolations. It disarms death in his view, dissipates its terrors and softens its bitterness, for it takes from mourning the irrevocable character that would transform it into despair. May this royalty of the risen Christ be your consolation in the day of mournful separations, helping you like the patriarch to rise up from your dead with your heart, though bleeding, comforted by so great a hope! Say to yourselves, when you see the body of your friend laid in the tomb, It is not possible that he should remain within the bonds of death, since those bonds have been rent for us as for Christ; and the day will come when this dust, reanimated and become a glorious body, shall be another witness of the efficacy of His redemption, and as it were a second justification in the Spirit of His work.

We read again in our text, "He was seen of angels." This was the second degree of His glory, the second sign of His royalty. We understand by these words the return of Christ to the region of divine light, where happy spirits enjoy the presence and the sight of God. I know well that in speaking

of this region we run the risk of being charged with materialism; for according to certain teachers, the ascension of Christ would seem to be a gross idea, one of those sports of the Church's infancy of which she ought to free herself in her full maturity. For ourselves we believe in it, not only because the historical testimony which informs us of it carries authority in our view, but also because we have need of the belief. No doubt communion with God is unrestricted by time or space, and heaven sheds its pure felicity into every heart that possesses the divine fellowship. But it is not the less true that there is bitter suffering in inhabiting, even though heaven be in the heart, an abode darkened by sin. The perpetual contrast between the life of the soul and the mournful spectacle of a polluted world, is not one of the lightest afflictions of the righteous. We have need of harmony, and certainly the sight of evil must have formed a part of the long endurance of Him whose eyes are too pure to behold it. We believe, then, firmly that there is a region where these distressing contrasts will exist no longer; where God will be all in all. This region which, by an image no less sublime than popular, we compare to what we know most pure, grand, and beautiful when we call it heaven, was to re-open for the risen Christ as the palace of His glory. There would He exchange the society of men such as Caiaphas and Judas for that of the holy angels, and receive in place of shame in a world that had not known Him the honour that was His due. Long enough had He suffered indignity; the eternal Hosanna was now to drown the clamours of an unjust people. The song of the Lamb was to replace the hooting of the impious and ungrateful multitude, and the hymn of the seraph

to succeed the mocking laugh of the pharisee. Ah! now we understand how much glory is comprised in those simple words: "He was seen of angels." With what holy enthusiasm, when the gates of heaven were lifted up to admit its King, did not the chant of adoration resound as if with the sacred desire of compensating Him for the outrages of the judgment hall and of Calvary! What a moment was that when they saw Him again, and when amid their faithful hosts He took His seat once more on that throne which He had left to offer the holy sacrifice of love, and to which in the triumph of that love He now returned! "He was seen of angels."

And here, brethren, a connection, or rather a contrast presents itself to our mind. In our first discourse we showed you Eden closed, and the Seraphim defending it with their flaming swords, against man exiled and condemned. Now He who was seen of angels, celebrated by them, surrounded by their innumerable choirs, was man still, or rather was man anew, the head of the race, the type of its destinies! It was redeemed human nature that was thus welcomed by the blessed spirits, and is seated, as the apostle says, in the heavenly places! Compare this day of the ascension with the day of condemnation. Compare the seraphim at the gates of Eden with the angels of the paradise regained, and you will recognize in this contrast the greatness of the redeeming work. From the desolation to the glory how long a road had to be traversed! How should we be astonished at the price paid for such a restoration! But how complete was that restoration! As the fall was deep, so great was the raising. The fall plunged us into the abyss, the raising brings us to God in the person of the

triumphant Christ. Let not Christianity, then, be spoken of as a religion that does not raise mankind. Because it does not flatter the pride of man, he has thought that it really abased him, and refused him his legitimate honour. It is not true that pride leads to glory. It presents only a vain mirage, and draws humanity to approach that it may be left in the mire deceived and degraded. Christianity alone satisfies the need of glory, which has something justifiable in it when not sophisticated. For a fallen creature glory is only to be found in recovery, and recovery can begin only in a recognition of the fall. Humiliation, says the Scripture, comes before restoration; that is to say, it alone leads to glory. It is not an end but a means. The end is the true glorification of human nature. Thus while anti-christian doctrines endeavour to hide the miseries of humanity and to conceal its shame by artificially disposing the folds of a delusive veil over its hideous wounds, Christianity tears off the veil that it may heal the wounds. It stoops to the poor human creature, fallen and corrupted, and takes him by the hand, conducts him through forgiveness to heaven, and places him there; and upon the very throne of God he recognizes himself as eternally glorified. It is thus that the religion of humility degrades and debases humanity.

But, my brethren, let not this assimilation between you and Christ, which we are warranted by the Bible in carrying very far, prevent your perceiving the unique and special character of our Lord's royalty. Forget not that it was said of Him that God had given Him a name which is above every other name; that every knee in heaven and in earth, and under the earth, should bow before Him; and that every tongue

should confess that He is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.¹ We owe Him adoration, and we should express it in all our religious language. Let us have a heavenly intimacy with Him, but let us avoid that undignified familiarity which, in the words of certain Christians, too much effaces the impression of reverence. His exceeding love is constantly filling up the gulph between Himself and us; He stoops even to our dust, like a tender brother, to encourage and raise the humblest Christian. Let us ever shew that we understand that this loving Saviour is God; and ever manifest more and more a practical faith in His kingship. O sacred name of my Saviour, at once gentle and holy, we love to bend our knee before Thee! O our divine King, while Thou art offended and disowned on this earth, which Thou hast sprinkled with Thy blood, we would worship Thee, and drown in our praises the insults of Thine enemies! Our reverence equals our love. At once friends and servants, according to Thine own words—we would rest with John upon Thy bosom, and sit with Mary at Thy feet!

We have seen Christ, then, rising and ascending to His throne; we must now enquire how He reigns. His royalty is that of love, and He makes it a glorious ministry of mercy. He exercises it in heaven, first, by His sovereign intercession. We read in the Epistle to the Hebrews, that He intercedes for us. Christ collects all our prayers, and adds to them His all-powerful Amen. Begun upon earth, in the depths often of hearts broken and overwhelmed, they are finished by His divine lips. He lays before the Father our

¹ Phil. ii. 9-11.

desires, complaints, and aspirations; and as He is the eternal Word, that is to say, the perfect expression of the thought and will of God, His prayer is granted before it is offered. To pray thus is to reign; and whoever prays in His name shares also in His blessed royalty. Let no one, then, refuse to pray on the pretence of unworthiness. Unworthy of grace you are and ever must be upon earth; but you are not alone in your prayer. He in whose name you pray, and who prays with you, is worthy of being heard, for He is the great High Priest, the king of the new covenant. If the Son of God were not heard, who could be so? But He is and ever must be heard. Not one of our requests is lost; all are accepted and consecrated by Him. Let them rise to Him, then, without ceasing, and blend themselves with His own, as the little streams are lost in the mighty waters of a broad river!

But the royalty of Christ manifests itself not only in His relations with His Father, but also in the power which He exerts over mankind. We shall soon see the measure in which this power is exercised; let us dwell for the present on its method. It is by the Holy Spirit that Christ governs and reigns over hearts. As we have seen, it entered into His design to give the Holy Spirit to the world; and the work of this mysterious agent of divine love in our souls characterizes, in an especial manner, the reign of Christ. It is the reign of the Spirit. He is constantly present in the world, inclining, changing, directing hearts, and rendering them fruitful. Strangely erroneous notions are sometimes held regarding the work of the Spirit of God. Through a false idea of the divine sovereignty, He has been conceived of as a power like the

irresistible forces of nature ; the wind that bends or breaks the tree, the thunderbolt which consumes it. But this is to confound two domains entirely distinct—that of necessity, and that of liberty ; the external and the moral world. It has been thought that grace was glorified when it was materialized—for it is materialized when its moral and spiritual character are taken away. No part of Scripture represents the Holy Spirit as a power that cannot be resisted. On the contrary, we are taught that we can repel and grieve Him. He is only granted to those who ask. The reign of Christ has then no relation to that sort of divine sovereignty with which it has too often been sought to identify it. Such sovereignty, very far from promoting the glory of God, would diminish it ; for in truth, infinitely greater power is needed for reigning over free beings than over those that are passive and inert. It is an infinitely grander thing to direct creatures endowed with intelligence and free will, than such as can neither resist nor obey. To change a will is more than to suppress it. Absolute power belongs to the material world—that is its domain ; while for moral purposes it is condemned to impotence, and whenever it has attempted to intrude into the spiritual world, it has been shamefully repulsed. Our ideas of the liberty of conscience are founded strictly on the incompetence of absolute power in regard to that which pertains to the soul and the will. To transform grace into a sort of divine sovereignty, by supposing it to be an irresistible force, is then to deprive it of its true character ; we maintain, in fact, that it is to rob God of His true power, under pretence of preserving it to Him. His power is admirable above all in this, that it harmonizes with liberty ; and while maintaining that

liberty, attains its own ends. The Spirit of God penetrates and transforms us, triumphing over our resistance. Grace is a divine persuasion; it is not by a stroke of authority, but by a secret and gentle influence that we are won; and the greatest manifestations of its might are connected, as in the case of Saint Paul's conversion, with a long inward conflict, the decision of which may be rapid. Cease, then, to confound christianity with fatalism in the intricacies of a logic which might have been justifiable three centuries ago, as a weapon in the great war against popish pelagianism, but which in our day would turn against those who should employ it, and strike them to death by rendering them the supporters of contemporary pantheism. Let not the reign of Christ be compared with what is most evil upon earth; let not the power of God be identified with absolute force; or the free and mighty Spirit of God be degraded to the rank of a mechanical and material power.¹

Having thus recognized the spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom, it remains for us to inquire how He established it upon earth. Our text teaches us that it comprises two domains—one more general, and another more special. "He was preached unto the Gentiles, and believed on in the world." The preach-

¹ We know very well that we shall be answered by an appeal to the ninth chapter of Romans. But we are convinced that the ordinary exegesis here is very superficial. The general thesis of the apostle is not sufficiently considered—he is wishing to assert, in opposition to the Jew, the freedom of God's grace, which is not limited by any natural fact; and he employs, in the last part of the chapter, a style of argumentation adapted to crush his opponent, and consisting, in fact, of a refusal of the discussion. But we shall absolutely falsify the authority of Scripture if we dwell on this isolated portion without interpreting it by the Bible as a whole, and by so many teachings of the same apostle, which serve as a natural commentary for it. See the development of Saint Paul's doctrine in the second volume of our *History of the Three First Centuries of the Church*.

ing of the Gospel is the first display of the kingship of Christ on earth—it is an evidence of His power that extends everywhere. The faith of Christians is a higher and more real manifestation of that power; for the reign of Christ over the Church is pre-eminently His royalty. Let us consider, then, this double phase of His kingly character.

The apostle Paul regarded the preaching of the Gospel as forming a part of the mystery of godliness. We do not attach to it enough importance. In itself, even before producing faith, it has immense influence. It puts into circulation a host of true and fruitful ideas, which, proceeding from revelation, compose a sort of moral atmosphere that one cannot help breathing. The Gospel, by a strange inconsistency, is more promptly realized in the social than in the individual sphere. It is in fact easier to draw general inferences than personal ones, which involve self-renunciation. However this be, it is certain that the preaching of the Gospel has had a great effect on the history of mankind. It has but required to be preached to the heathen, and paganism, fatally undermined, has crumbled away stone after stone, till, like a gigantic ruin, it has sunk entirely into nothingness. We are warranted in speaking of a christian civilization in opposition to the heathen one. The modern world has come gradually under the influence of the Gospel; respect for man as man, an interest in the poor, freedom of thought and faith, all these divine features by which it is more or less characterized, and without which it would fall into barbarism, are owed to the preaching of the Gospel. There is also at the basis of modern literature a foundation of thoughts and feelings entirely unknown to the pagan world. If

we put together all these facts we have a right to say, in the beautiful words of a great thinker: "You could not suppress Christianity without tearing up by the roots all that is good and beautiful in that civilization on which you pride yourselves."¹ We recognize, then, the royalty of Christ, the royalty of truth in these general results of evangelical preaching, and we firmly believe that there is reserved for us in the future still more of a salutary application of christian principles in the domain of social life.

But the preaching of the Gospel reveals in a more profound sense the kingship of Christ. His word is in itself a power. It cannot die away without echo, and fall into empty space. It cannot return to Him without effect. Wherever it resounds it leaves an ineffaceable trace of its passage—either the bright lines of redeeming love or the furrows of the vengeful lightning. It binds or it looses. When repulsed it leaves behind it the dust from the feet of the divine messengers in the persons of whom it has been anew despised, and in this dust are sown the severest judgments of God. When this word comes to a fresh country it is not certain that it will be received with eagerness, but it is certain that it will produce the most striking effects. It will disturb souls and shake consciences. Its arrival will be known by the anger that it will excite, and by the actings of the grace that it will inspire. It will bring either a blessing or a curse, according to the way in which it is received. The same fact is realized in the soul that is brought into contact with Christ's word. It is a moment of fearful solemnity when the Gospel comes to a man. His whole future life depends on the reception that he gives to it. It will return to heaven either to proclaim His salva-

¹ Schleiermacher, *Discourses on Religion*.

tion or to register His obduracy. It is this word which from henceforth exercises judgment upon earth. "Ye have one that judgeth you," said Christ; "the word that I have spoken to you." This infallible judge constrains men's hearts to unveil themselves before it, to show whether they love the darkness or the light: it tears from them by its declarations, which are so precise and so opposed to sin, the masks of worldly virtue, and lays them bare before itself. They cannot evade its power; with a single word it often transfixes them. It is the two-edged sword piercing even to the joints and marrow. In the period of Christ's ministry this influence of His word already made itself felt, but it was restricted because the Gospel was not yet preached to all the nations of the earth, but had only been proclaimed to the Jews. Thus the apostle Paul notices as a fact of high importance, that God manifest in the flesh was preached to the Gentiles. Henceforth the royalty of God's word, and consequently of Christ, has no limits. It may extend over the whole world; the Christian mission, which is ever conquering for it new domains, daily enlarges its empire, and contributes directly to the glorification of Christ as a king.

After having said, "He was preached to the Gentiles," the apostle adds: "He was believed on in the world." But real faith is only found in the Church. It is of the Church, therefore, that he here speaks. Christ reigns over it in a sense altogether special. The general reign in the world by the preaching of the Gospel does not suffice for Him. He has His own people, who recognize His laws alone, and this people form the christian Church—not any one of its fractions, but the entire Church in its true, which is its spiritual catholicity. Christ is its only Head;

He governs it in every point, He feeds it with His life, He lavishes on it His gifts: from Him it draws its substance, both as a whole and in each one of its members. Therefore does it owe to Him an absolute and undivided submission. Not to depend on Him alone, but to recognize in the smallest degree the rule of a human power, is to dispute the royalty of Christ, to rob Him of it in part. It is impossible from this point of view to hesitate about the constitution that should be given to the Church. The question is so simple that it is put to our christian good sense. Is it true, or is it not, that Christ is the king of the Church? If He be its king, does it not follow that the Church must recognize no authority but His own? Is it in its normal condition when subjected to sinful men? Does it not really take from Christ all that it loses of freedom? If we do not seek for vain subtleties, but content ourselves with a simple response, we shall surely recognize that the royalty of Christ implies the complete independence of the Church. But let it ever remember that this independence has no value for it save as it leads to an obedience ever more inward and more true to its divine King. He desires to reign over it only by love, for this Head of the Church is at the same time its Spouse. By loving Him with fervour, by uniting itself ever more closely to Him, it will best glorify Him. Let not, then, the Christians of our generation, by their spiritual coldness, refuse this blessed royalty of love!

Saint Paul sums up in a word all the divine characteristics of the royalty of Christ, when he says at the close of our text: "He was received up into glory." What in fact but a receiving up into glory are His

resurrection, His ascension, the power of His Gospel in the world, and His supreme authority over the Church. But this elevation to glory, absolute in one sense, is progressive in another—the royalty of Christ is to be constantly extending over the earth, and the succession of human generations during eighteen centuries has had no other object than to promote the development of the kingdom of God, which is identified with the reign of His Son. Nothing can be added to the glory of Christianity such as it is contained in the Gospel; but in passing through our limited intellects and our polluted hearts, it has inevitably undergone more than one alteration. The Christianity of the Church did not long remain the primitive Christianity, that of Christ and of the Gospel. It did not enter into the designs of God to preserve His revelation from all damage, for to do this it must have been placed by the Church beyond our reach, buried in the earth like the talent of the wicked servant in the parable. God designed, on the contrary, that by personal labour we should possess ourselves of His truth, and Christ become truly Christ within us. But to attain this last result of religious history, many sad experiences, many gropings, many digressions and falls were inevitable. Nevertheless the divine object is constantly pursued, and Christianity rises in glory from one period to another in spite of the persistent efforts of anti-christianity which leaves it neither truce nor repose.

From the sanguinary persecutions of the first centuries, in spite of heresy and oppression, Christianity rose in glory, victorious over the old Roman world, which had thought to crush it in its cradle. From the thick darkness of the middle ages, in spite of the

Church of Rome, the successor of heathen persecutors, it rose in glory by a heroic return to the apostolic age, drawing out the book of God from under the bushel of human traditions. From the frightful infidelity of the last century, it rose in glory with new life and youth. From the confusions of our nineteenth century it rises in glory, treading all that opposes it under foot, breaking the bonds of insufficient systems of doctrine, drowning the voice of a loose criticism, freeing itself from the shackles of state-religions, and reconquering the spirituality of early days, both in doctrine and in life. Once more shall it rise in glory when, at the appointed time, fulfilling the long desire of the Church, the Son of God shall reappear in a visible form to wage one last combat with anti-Christ, to raise the dead, to judge the world, to crown His own, and to consummate the triumph that He has been winning during eighteen centuries. Then shall be the end, the end of all that we know—the impenetrable veil of eternity falls here; and we can only listen to the resounding of the song of the Lamb that was slain and has saved us, and join our voices to those which praise Him from everlasting to everlasting.

We have now ended our series of discourses. We have presented to you in its successive phases the infinite work of the world's redemption. We have seen it begun in heaven and in Eden, carried on slowly during the dark ages of preparation, receiving its highest accomplishment in the life and death of Christ, and finally completed on the throne of glory where He took His seat after His resurrection, and whither He draws us by His Spirit. Our parting word, our conclusion from all that has gone before is to implore you to come to Him, the Redeemer and the King!

No other answers as He does to the wants of your hearts. Ye spirits, tormented with doubts, wishing to believe, but unable yet to do so from having breathed the injurious air tainted with scepticism and with licentiousness, which seems to be the moral atmosphere of our age—come to Christ the Prophet, and He will give you those firm convictions for which you yearn, He will dissipate your painful uncertainty, and will bring you into contact with a living truth that you will never lose again. Ye troubled hearts, seeking to attain to goodness but without success, trembling before an offended God, secretly longing for a free pardon—come to Christ at once the Priest and the Sacrifice. Come to be sprinkled with that atoning blood which purifies and justifies. Accept this great mystery of redemption. It is the very foundation of Christianity. There is neither peace nor holiness save beneath this cross. And you, weak and timid Christians, who know not how to enjoy your power and your glory—come to Christ the King, and the lustre of His victory shall be reflected upon you. You shall be no longer mournful witnesses for the grace of God. You shall tell of it, as is fitting, with joy and with power, and the certainty of one day reigning with Christ shall give you courage to share now in His sufferings. Let us all, whoever we be, come to God our Saviour;—and to the Father who has prepared salvation, to the Son who has accomplished it, to the Holy Spirit who realizes it anew within our hearts,—to God thrice holy and eternally blessed, be honour, glory, and praise, for ever and for ever!

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